VERHAEREN

BELGIUM'S AGO

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BELGIUM'S AGONY

Translation and Introduction by M. T. H. SADLER. The three poems in the book, which are given untranslated, have not before been published in book form.

EMILE VERHAEREN

BELGIUM'S AGONY

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A special edition of the French text of this book, entitled "La Belgique Sanglante," has been prepared. It is limited to fifty numbered copies, printed on handmade paper, and may be obtained at the price of half-a-guinea net per copy.

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INTRODUCTION[1]

I

A FEW weeks after the outbreak of war the newspapers, in an obscure paragraph, stated that German artillery had bombarded the Flemish village of Saint-Amand, near Antwerp. Nearly simultaneously, but in numerous and prominent columns, they described the wanton and ruthless destruction of the ancient university city of Louvain. Thirdly, on August 24, began the great British retreat from the line Mons-Condé, the retreat to south-westward that experts hold to rank among the finest military achievements of history.

And between these three happenings there is a connecting link other than the tremendous struggle of which they form a part, a link to which subsequent events and, most of all, this little book have given a melancholy and tragic interest.

[1] For permission to use again such portions of this introduction as appeared originally in *Poetry and Drama*, I am indebted to the kindness of the editor.—M.T.H.S.

INTRODUCTION

At Saint-Amand Emile Verhaeren was born. At Louvain he was educated. And not more than fifteen miles south-west of Mons, in the full path of the retreating British army and the pursuing German hordes, lay (who can say what is now its fate?) the little country farm in which he used, every year, to spend the spring and autumn.

There are few men living who have loved and served their country so nobly as Verhaeren has loved and honoured Belgium. His beloved Flanders, whose every feature he has made famous wherever the French language is read or spoken, lies now bleeding and stricken. Shall the man who has sung his country's beauty in time of prosperity, and who now shares her misery, fail to sing her glory in her hour of triumphant agony? This passionate and moving book is the answer to that question. May it, as a comment on the greatest war of history by the greatest poet of the time, be treasured and applauded alike by this generation and posterity. The few pages that follow are the tribute of one who, from admiring Verhaeren as a poet, has had the privilege to come to love him as a man.

INTRODUCTION

II

SAINT-AMAND lies near the mouth of the Scheldt in the fertile plain of Flanders, and the poet has indeed assimilated to himself this land of wide horizons, of great gulfs of sky. Its breadth and distance have become part of him, and from a childhood full of wonder at the powers and moods of nature, he has grown to a manhood strengthened by that finest of all beliefs, the belief in the limitless possibilities of mankind.

It is barely possible to overrate the influence of the poet's child-memories on his mature work and ultimate philosophy. He spent his youth in a country where, year in year out, is played in all its force the elemental drama of nature. The moods of every season became ingrained in him, and in his poems to-day the world may experience the same thrill, the same awe that the boy Verhaeren felt at the joy and sorrow of that Flemish plain.

As a child he would lie in bed and listen while the great tempests from the North Sea came roaring over the fields and huddled villages, beating their music into his brain,

filling his blood with their blind and splendid strength. As a man, forty years later, he writes of "Vents de Tempêtes":

> Un poing d'effroi tord les villages;
> Les hauts clochers, dans les lointains,
> Envoient l'écho de leurs tocsins
> Bondir de plage en plage.

As a child, the morning after one of these gales, he would run out into the sullen, uneasy daylight and watch the racing clouds, the sudden glint of sunshine, the weary trees still writhing after their buffeting of the night, and hear, far to the southward, the mutter of the distant storm vanished beyond the edge of that sad, tormented plain. As a man he writes of the far-flung clamour of the winds "qui se querellent, de loin en loin, à l'infini"; of the haunted menace of November:

> Voici les vents, les saints, les morts
> Et la procession profonde
> Des arbres fous et des branchages tords
> Qui voyagent de l'un à l'autre bout du monde.
>
> Voici les grand'routes comme des croix
> A l'infini parmi les plaines,
> Les grand'routes et puis leurs croix lointaines,
> A l'infini sur les vallons et dans les bois!
>
> (*Les Vignes de ma Muraille.*)

As a child, again, he would walk the empty streets of some little gabled town, while the quiet rain filled the air with its whispers, dripping from eaves and ledges, making little pools among the cobble-stones. He would rove the plain in springtime feeling the bursting life in hedgerow and plough-land. He would lie among the sand-dunes in the summer sun and bathe in the royal waters of the Scheldt. And all these moods of nature he has sung as no one else has sung them, with the fierce delight of intimate worship:

> Longue, comme les fils sans fin, la longue pluie
> Interminablement, à travers le jour gris,
> Ligne les carreaux verts avec ses long fils gris,
> Infiniment, la pluie
> La longue pluie,
> La pluie.
>
> (*Les Villages Illusoires.*)

Or again:

> Au long des cours, des impasses et des venelles
> Des vieux quartiers retraits,
> La pluie
> Semble à jamais
> Chez elle.
>
> (*Les Villes à Pignons.*)

The majority of the poems dealing with

Verhaeren's native land, and it is they, at such a time and in such a book as this, demand chief mention, are contained in the five books of the series *Toute la Flandre*. The first poem in the first book of the series (*Les Tendresses Premières*) is almost an epitome of the whole. It is a rhythmic autobiography, beginning:

. . . les souvenirs chauffent mon sang
Et pénètrent mes moelles . . .

Je me souviens du village près de l'Escaut,
D'où l'on voyait les grands bateaux
Passer, ainsi qu'un rêve empanaché de vent
Et merveilleux de voiles,
Le soir en cortège sous les étoiles.

The subsequent verses describe the garden, the neighbouring factory (belonging to his uncle), his parents and relations, his animals; and the poem culminates in a song of praise and love for Flanders. Fierce pride in his country permeates these five books; and every summer, before the war, he would visit this beloved land communing with the mighty ghosts of her past history, moving among the peasant men and women, or with the grim, silent fishermen watching the grey sea rolling

tirelessly against the desolation of "La Guirlande des Dunes."

This series of books comprises those poems of Verhaeren which were formerly most beloved by his countrymen and least admired by foreigners. That they glorify Flanders was reason enough for their fame among the Flemish, and also for their comparative neglect by the French. Whether Belgium's heroism will cause them to be more widely read the future will show, but there are, between their author and the Frenchman at least, psychological differences too deep ever to be entirely bridged.

Verhaeren has never been one of the many gods of literary France, because only when he is entirely philosophic is he really in sympathy with French ideals. He is too tempestuous, too illogical—with the unheeding illogicality of nature—to appeal to the Gallic sense. The French, neither in literature nor painting, have yet grappled successfully with Nature. Corot could not refrain from obvious lyricism, from becoming a slave to twilight. Only Cézanne, and perhaps Courbet, seem to have felt the stark basis of landscape, and the former

was thwarted by lack of skill in externalising his impressions, while the latter never threw off entirely the fetters of conventional composition. In poetry the names of Hugo and Francis Jammes suggest themselves. Of Hugo I shall speak in a minute, while Jammes, for all his charm, can never seriously be pitted against Verhaeren as a poet of nature. The Fleming is nearer the English, and one cannot help feeling the similarity between Verhaeren's love of wind and sunshine and the pantheism of Wordsworth or the painting of Constable. Indeed, Constable seems to suggest an apt example. Consider one of those wonderful cloud-studies of his—a windy sky piled high with great white clouds, and at the bottom of the picture a mere strip of sun-flecked field. Then read Verhaeren's poem "Les Beaux Nuages":

Avec ton ciel de nacre et d'ambre
Tu rehausses les champs, les prés et les villages,
O mois des beaux nuages
Septembre!

* * * * *

L'air vibre; et l'on entend la cadence des ailes
Passer, en vols nombreux, sur les blanches maisons;

Et près du bois, là-bas, les cueilleuses d'airelles
Vers leur rouge récolte inclinent leur chanson.

* * * * *

Et Septembre, là-haut,
Avec son ciel de nacre et d'or voyage,
Et suspend sur les prés, les champs et les hameaux,
Les blocs étincelants de ses plus beaux nuages.
(*Les Plaines.*)

A further comparison between this and, say, Baudelaire's prose poem "Les Nuages" will reveal an essential difference of attitude. Similarly Verhaeren sees in autumn either the fragrant memories of a glowing summer or the menace of wind and frost; that is to say the idea of continuity, of a future pregnant with possibility, never leaves him. Verlaine, Merrill, Moréas, or any other *paysagiste* of French symbolist generation, will sing of the plaintive beauty of decay, rejoicing in the quiet music of the dying year, taking an isolated, sensuous delight in nature's melancholy, but giving no thought to the place of autumn in the endless cycle of seasons, feeling no sorrow that another summer has faded into mist.[1] And so it seems that those people who

[1] This distinction between Verhaeren and the French *Symbolistes* holds good in other spheres than that of land-

blame Verhaeren for rhetoric and grandiloquence (and they are not only Frenchmen) make the mistake of judging him by "symboliste" standards. There is no denying that to pass, for instance, from Retté's "Grand vent" (*Campagne Première*) to any of Verhaeren's poems on wind, is to pass out from the study of the philosopher on to a storm-swept moor. The Frenchman sees in the wind a disturber of nature, an angry intruder bringing war from distant lands, not Nature's own anger, following her gentleness, as the righteous anger of a man succeeds his friendship.

The critic, then, who approaches from this point of view, is forced to fall back on Victor Hugo for his parallel, and Hugo to the "symboliste" is anathema. Hugo is indeed always outside nature. Even giving him the credit that is his due—and this, at present, is rarely done—one cannot but feel that he sees

scape. The ultra-subjectivity of the latter's love-poems, which celebrate one night of passion, one hour even, leave unexpressed the vital importance of sex to sex in the continuance of the race, are devoid entirely of that natural desire of male for female which gives Verhaeren's frankness the purity of wind and rain.

in Nature a pageant, like any other mighty spectacle, and that he tells of her triumphant colouring as a looker-on would describe the uniforms and martial music of a procession.[1] Verhaeren feels himself a child of the wind and rain and sunshine; their moods are his moods, and as Wordsworth endowed his mountains with motive and idea, so the Flemish poet feels Nature has reasons for her anger or delight.

The rhetorician loses the power to be simple. The pageant-seeker can see no beauty in quiet colouring. But Verhaeren has met neither of these fates. His poetry can be

[1] Tancrède de Visan in his *L'Attitude du Lyrisme contemporain* gives a skilful study of Verhaeren, which shows more sympathy than is usually found in French criticism. Of the poet's connection with *symbolisme* M. de Visan says: "Verhaeren stands as the leader of the former of the two great movements springing from Victor Hugo, which ended, one in the lyricism *from within*, the lyricism of *immanence*, and the other, personified in Moréas, in the poetry of classicism." He says further, when comparing Hugo and Verhaeren, that while the former sometimes loses himself in mere repetition of sounding words, the latter never allows eloquence or moral exhortation to swing his poetry over the boundaries of force into the gulf of bathos.

more tempestuous, and also more profoundly calm, than that of any other modern writer. He can be tender as only great strength is tender. There is always dignity in his passion, even when there is most fire. Above all, he has reached the point when passion has become enduring.

Some considerations of the love-poems shall close this brief homage to a noble poet. They are contained in three books—*Les Heures Claires*, *Les Heures d'Après-midi*, and *Les Heures du Soir*, and when I read them I feel that perhaps these three books are the greatest he has written. "A celle qui vit à mes côtes" he dedicates these tremendous poems of love. He is the ideal lover, the man who has passed from the bewildered awakening of passion, through the triumph of conquest, to the quiet devotion and confidence that lasts for ever. He writes none of the forlorn and plaintive music of the self-pitying, hopeless swain. He fights his battle in silence, wins the woman he wants, and then with all thankfulness and all humility sings his love for her:

J'étais si lourd, j'étais si las,
J'étais si vieux de méfiance,

J'étais si lourd, j'étais si las
Du vain chemin de tous mes pas,

Je méritais si peu la merveilleuse joie
De voir tes pieds illuminer ma voie,
Que j'en reste tremblant encore, et presque en pleurs
Et humble à tout jamais en face du bonheur.

* * * * *

L'amour, oh! qu'il soit la clairvoyance
Unique et l'unique raison du cœur,
A nous, dont le plus fol bonheur
Est d'être fous de confiance.

(*Les Heures Claires.*)

In *Les Heures d'Après-midi* sounds a gentler note, a note of greater peace, after fifteen years' love and confidence. The mystery has partly gone, but no disillusionment has come in its place:

Je ne vois plus ta bouche et tes grands yeux
Luire, comme un matin de fête,
Ni, lentement, se reposer ta tête
Dans le jardin massif et noir de tes cheveux.

Tes mains chères qui demeurent si douces
Ne viennent plus comme autrefois
Avec de la lumière au bout des doigts
Me caresser le front, comme une aube les mousses.

* * * * *

Mais, néànmoins, mon cœur ferme et fervent te dit:
Que m'importent les deuils mornes et engourdis,
Puisque je sais que rien au monde
Ne troublera jamais notre être exalté
Et que notre âme est trop profonde
Pour que l'amour dépende encore de la beauté.

Finally, the poems of *Les Heures du Soir*—perhaps the most beautiful book of the three—show us the poet, a little weary after a life of crowded effort, now lingering in the garden among the flowers, now watching the flames on winter evenings, but with a heart still on fire with passionate memories.

Mets ta chaise près de la mienne
Et tends les mains vers le foyer
Pour que je voie entre tes doigts
La flamme ancienne
Flamboyer;
Et regarde le feu
Tranquillement, avec tes yeux
Qui n'ont peur d'aucune lumière
Pour qu'ils me soient encor plus francs
Quand un rayon rapide et fulgurant
Jusques au fond de toi les frappe et les éclaire.

* * * * *

Comme je t'aime alors, ma claire bien-aimée,
Dans ta chair accueillante et pâmée,
Qui m'entoure à son tour et me fond dans sa joie!
Tout me devient plus cher, et ta bouche et tes bras
Et tes seins bienveillants où mon pauvre front las

Après l'instant de plaisir fou que tu m'octroies
Tranquillement, près de ton cœur reposera.

There is one more short poem that I should like to quote in full, before leaving the poet in, what seemed, the gathering twilight of his perfect love-story:

Avec mes vieilles mains de ton front rapprochées
J'écarte tes cheveux et je baise, ce soir,
Pendant ton bref sommeil au bord de l'âtre noir
La ferveur de tes yeux sous tes longs cils cachée.

Oh! la bonne tendresse en cette fin de jour!
Mes yeux suivent les ans dont l'existence est faite
Et tout à coup ta vie y paraît si parfaite
Qu'un émouvant respect attendrit mon amour.

Et comme au temps où tu m'étais la fiancée,
L'ardeur me vient encor de tomber à genoux
Et de toucher la place où bat ton cœur si doux
Avec les doigts aussi chastes que mes pensées.

III

Before the war Belgium was a synthesis of Europe. She contained every aspect of civilization: rolling farmlands, quiet, cloistered monasteries, thunderous railway stations, belching factories. Equally and terribly is she now the symbol of the German fury. Alike in her heroism and her agony does she

stand for the strength and suffering of the Allied cause.

It is fitting then that Verhaeren also, in whom is the essence of every art, should at this time come forward and portray his martyred country. To the reader his superb poetry is exhausting. It sweeps him away with the turbulence of its power, it awes him with its majesty, it soothes him with its tenderness. Like life it must be lived, because it is life. Verhaeren, more than any poet, is the prophet of "art for life's sake," for no man has loved life more than he has loved it, no man has wrenched from existence more variegated masses of joy and sorrow.

He has stood on the hill top in the carnival of wind and sunshine, he has seen hunger, dirt and misery; he has known peace and love. Now, in his old age, has come to him the supreme and terrible experience of war. No man can wish for a better life than this, if it be granted to him, finally, his battles done, to sit by the fire with his soul at rest, while the storm weeps at the windows.

M. T. H. SADLER.

LA BELGIQUE SANGLANTE

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DEPUIS bientôt trente ans
Que par l'entente libre en un effort constant
S'était comme augmentée
L'humanité.
La guerre
Semblait aux hommes de ce temps
N'être plus guère
Qu'un vieux charnier caché, par les fleurs, sous la terre.

L'occident était fier de penser sous les cieux
D'après un ordre harmonieux
Pareil au large accord des étoiles tranquilles
Et de voir jour à jour les plus belles idées
S'élucider
Grâce au verbe de ceux qui parlaient dans les villes.

Ils affirmaient que désormais
L'homme à l'homme s'opposerait
Encor, mais dans la paix ;

Que pareil à la sève enflant l'arbre et l'écorce
Le droit élargirait l'appareil de la force;
Que la justice était une arme et un besoin;
Qu'il fallait croire en son cerveau plus qu'en son poing;
Qu'une réalité plus haute et plus sereine
Aurait servi de champ à toute vie humaine
Que déjà s'annonçait l'imminent avenir
Où les efforts rivaux devaient enfin s'unir
Tout comme au long des fils des machines nouvelles,
Deux courants opposés font tout à coup jaillir
Grâce a leur conflit même, une unique étincelle.

Ainsi s'exaltaient-ils par les beaux soirs d'été,
—Leurs gestes soutenant leurs paroles d'apôtres—
Ils se prouvaient fiers d'eux-mêmes et fiers des autres
Et comme heureux de leur témérité.
Et l'Europe par dessus bois, fleuves, montagnes
Leur envoyait le cri de son assentiment,
Et ce cri répété troublait étrangement,
Au long du Rhin armé, les peuples d'Allemagne.

Pour eux, hélas, l'entente humaine était sans charmes
Et nul rêve ne leur semblait vaste et puissant

Que si les armes
Rouges de sang
Ne couvraient de leur bruit, tous les bruits de
la terre.

La haine organisée habitait leurs cerveaux,
Ils travaillaient dans leurs usines militaires,
Toujours à quelque meurtre effrayant et nou-
veau.
Ils étaient nets et prompts et durs, et le silence
Couvrait l'œuvre de mort de leur intelligence.
En pleine paix, quand l'homme à l'homme est
indulgent,
Ils épiaient partout les choses et les gens:
Quand ils savaient, ils se taisaient et atten-
daient.
Leurs maîtres à penser savamment bavardaient,
Mettant leur dogmatisme à la solde des crimes;
De laps en laps, quelqu'âpre et cruelle maxime
Devenait à leurs yeux la neuve vérité,
Si bien qu'ils s'exerçaient à la férocité
Au nom d'une future et sinistre sagesse.
Ils tuaient la vie ample et l'immense ferveur
Et l'essor libre et clair des volontés fécondes
Et telle était leur mécanique et sombre ardeur
Qu'ils paraissaient vouloir paralyser le monde.

Ils le traitaient selon leur loi;
Ils le pillaient et le brûlaient avec la rage
Qui remplace pour eux l'élan et le courage.
Maisons belles, monuments clairs, nobles beffrois,
Villes par la science et le temps consacrées.
France foulée aux pieds et Belgique éventrée.
Dites, quel deuil vous accablait en ces longs jours
Où l'incendie errait à travers vos contrées
Et bondissait de tour en tour!

Tandis que vous, vous vous battiez avec fierté
Pour ceux de vos berceaux, et pour ceux de vos tombes,
Eux ne songeaient qu'à rassembler des hécatombes
Pour déployer leur cruauté,

En des hameaux perdus et des bourgs solitaires.
Où passait le galop effréné des uhlans
On a trouvé planté, dans la gorge des mères
De longs couteaux couverts et de lait et de sang;
Des vieillards mis en rang au long d'une chaussée
Ployèrent les genoux pour recevoir la mort
Au bord de fosses qu'eux-mêmes avaient creusées;
Des filles de seize ans dont l'âme et dont le corps
Etaient vierges et clairs subirent les morsures

Et les baisers sanglants et ivres des soldats,
Et quand leur pauvre chair n'était plus que
blessures
On leur tranchait les seins avec des coutelas.

Partout, du fond des bourgs vers les villes voisines
Les gens fuyaient avec des yeux épouvantés
De voir comme une mer immense de ruines
Crouler sur le pays qu'ils avaient dû quitter.
Derrière eux s'exaltait le tocsin fou des cloches,
Et quand ils rencontraient quelque teuton frappé
Par une balle adroite, au bord d'un chemin proche,
Souvent ils découvraient, dans le creux de ses
poches,
Avec des colliers d'or et des satins fripés,
Deux petits pieds d'enfant atrocement coupés.

Oh! quel triste soleil fut le témoin, en Flandre,
Et des hameaux en feu, et des villes en cendre
Et de la longue horreur, et des crimes soudains
Dont avait faim et soif, le sadisme Germain.

CHAPTER I

DE PROFUNDIS CLAMAVI

THE Emperor William II has sworn many oaths. He swore that he would enter in triumph, now Paris, now Nancy, now Calais, now Warsaw. These oaths, which were in their way magnificent, he has not kept.

But he swore another oath in his letter to Albert I, King of the Belgians. He swore to lay waste the land of Belgium. And this oath, the oath of a criminal, is the only one he has not broken.

Before the war Belgium was a peaceful country, industrious, wealthy. She had been moulded gradually by the kindly hand of time. Twice in history her art had dominated Europe. First, in the fifteenth century, blazed far and wide the genius of Hubert and Jan van Eyck, of Memling, of Roger de la Pasture. These men with their school, Gérard David, Patinir, Henri Blès, Quentin Metzys, were the great gothic school of northern European

art. On the banks of the Rhine they found pupils. Two old painters, Wilhelm and Stefan Lochner, who of themselves painted with naïve timidity, acquired under the teaching of the Flemings, strong design, powerful colour, and above all vitality. Equally France came under the influence of the Flemish group. The schools of Avignon and Moulins owed to them their glory. Italy sent her artists to pay them tribute. The greatest of them, Antonello da Messina, forgot the traditions of his own land to follow those of Flanders. Spain was, as it were, a mere dependency of Flemish art, which art also dominated the east.

The second period of Belgian supremacy in art was in the seventeenth century. Then Rubens, Van Dyck, Brouwer, Teniers, Jordaens, Cornelius de Vos, reconquered for Antwerp the world-domination which the painters of Bruges had lost. To this group France owes Largillière, Sébastian Bourdon, Watteau, Pater, Lancret, Fragonard. England owes them Dobson and Lely, and, in part, Constable.

Further, since the fifteenth century, the

high-loom weavers spread over the whole continent a new art. The tapestries of Brussels are the finest in the world, and to them is owed the early glory of the Gobelins.

In this same period of famous painters, Belgium had her noble architects. The stones of her cathedrals at Tournai, Brussels, Antwerp, Malines, Ghent, Bruges, Mons, and Liège, were laid one on another to the topmost pinnacles of their towers, so that the memory of their Flemish and Walloon builders might be carried to the clouds and there abide for ever. Wonderful town-halls rose side by side with the churches; stately cloth or meat markets faced the great houses of the burgomasters and aldermen. The rumour of these towns grew and spread, and they became the wonder of the world.

Along a great river, the Scheldt, which winds its way among the provinces of Flanders, wealth and trade spread from town to town, and one of the greatest ports of Europe, alike in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Antwerp, came into being on Belgian territory, though on the very threshold of both Holland and Germany.

Another great river, the Meuse, flows through a district of beautiful, well-moulded valleys, among which tireless industry yielded coal and metals. From the banks of the Meuse came the stones which crown the lofty gables of the great houses, the transepts of the cathedrals. The Meuse is the river of Walloon industry, and the Scheldt is that of industrial Flanders.

These two races of Belgium, one Latin, the other Germanic, so wonderfully disposed over the country and controlled by their respective rivers, are hard-working, tenacious, and modest. They also have each their patience—the Flemish taciturn, the Walloon genial and humorous. They have won for their country not only comfort but wealth. Standing in order after England, Germany, and France, but before Italy, Austria, and Russia, Belgium holds the fourth place among the commercial nations of Europe. Her prosperity, unique among the small nations of to-day, is proof positive of the gifts of her people.

But there is still another side of her to be considered. Thirty years ago Belgium, until 1880 endowed only with material wealth,

produced a school of writers, whose brilliance was not long in winning a place among the intellectual forces of Europe. The spirit of the whole world was influenced and made nobler by Maeterlinck. He, like Carlyle and Emerson, has moulded the thought of his age, and trained its understanding and feeling after his own manner. Poems there were, some delicate and frail like those of Charles van Lerberghe, others vivid and intricately wrought, like those of Albert Giraud.

Lemonnier, Eckhoud, Krains, Glesener, Delattre, showed themselves observers and thinkers either powerfully realistic or romantic. Spaak, Crommelynck, Delterne, Van Offel, strove to found a school of original and personal drama. In every department of art, alike in painting and literature, new life showed itself. Charles de Coster, the father of Belgian literature and author of its first masterpiece: Tyl Uelenspiegel, saw his pioneer work carried on by numerous young disciples. They in their turn wrote books that found places beside his in well-chosen libraries. They also found beauty in the storehouses of past life and heroism; but many of them, belonging

as they do to the modern age, have explored the soul of the modern world, and have written, if not with more emotion than de Coster, at least with greater reality and truer proportion.

If ever, then, a community has shown itself worthy in loftiness and independence of life to make a part of European civilization, that community is the Belgian nation. She possessed, if I may use the metaphor, a more complete armoury of weapons, material, intellectual and moral, that any other nation of her size. She had won the respect and admiration, not only of the smaller neutral states, but of the great sovereign nations of the world. And those sovereign nations had gone further; they had sworn together to protect her. She had shown herself worthy of their protection, and never more so than on the day when one of her pledged protectors seized her treacherously by the throat and sought to strangle her.

There lies the deepest shame of Germany. She chose that little nation most deserving of life and growth to suffer for the German

opinion of the labour and existence of the non-German world. More than that, though infinitely stronger than Belgium—stronger by how many million men?—Germany did not even attack her face to face. She schemed and lied and even flattered. To within two hours of a cruel ultimatum she was breathing forth the purity of her intentions. She could have dared to offer open battle, but she preferred a treacherous ambuscade. And by this deed she has created against herself in the hearts of Belgians a hatred so passionate and so universal, that it will go down from generation to generation to a depth that no man can foretell. So far as any human sentiment can be, this hatred will be eternal. It will become a part of the education of our primary schools, it will be a tradition in our families, an instinct in our homes. It will be for us a hallowed reserve of rage and vigour. We shall feel, all of us, as did a peasant with whom I had a brief but wonderful conversation, not long ago, in a coast-village between Coxyde and Dunkirk. He said: "My wish is that when I am dying I may use the last reserve of my strength, which I shall have stored up

inside me, to utter one more curse, one more word of hatred against the Germans." I remarked that such feelings were far from Christian. He replied: "So much the worse!"

CHAPTER II

THE MARK OF THE TEUTON

YOU also may say, "To hate is unchristian and wrong." I agree with you. But must we not add that to hate is necessary? There must be hatred in battle. The fighter who does not hate will fight feebly and be beaten.

Besides which, for us Belgians the instinct of national self-preservation lays hatred upon us henceforth as a duty. Only by love or by hatred do nations achieve great things, and our freedom is a great thing. But the Germans have given us no choice of mood, no choice between hatred and love in our fight against them.

If ever oppression has been systematically brutal, it is theirs. They have waged no real war against us, they have been ravishers, thieves, pillagers, and assassins. Courageous enough in the actual battle, after each fight they have behaved like cruel cowards. Drunk

with our wine they became the merest bandits. They practised upon us, among many other vices, that particular perversion which, as has been proved more than once by legal trial, is rife in the German barracks and officers' clubs.

Our Belgian women, our girls, our children, became the playthings of German lust. Some of the varieties of debauch were of such complicated vileness as to be almost incredible. The extremes of horror to which these warriors can go have benefited them to this extent, namely, that the world's imagination will never wholly credit the perverted ingenuity they displayed in brutalizing Belgium.

Now that reports alike trustworthy and careful have been published, general opinion is bestirring itself and examining seriously the charges brought. Already shame is apparent in Germany itself.

When I first came to England, in the autumn of 1914, every story of atrocities was suspect. People said: "That 's all very well, but show us the man who has had his hands cut off, or the woman with the mangled breasts." And as it was unfortunately impossible to comply with this request, because the

man who had lost his hands, and the woman who had been mutilated had involuntarily died of their wounds, the sceptics concluded that the Germans were at least real soldiers and not murderers. "When we see, we will believe," was their attitude. Alas, such proof could only have been given by digging in the earth and opening up the graves of the victims.

To paint a complete picture of the German savagery in Belgium is, of course, impossible. Too many facts have escaped observation. Even those witnesses whose evidence can be checked are too numerous all to be quoted. It was principally at the beginning of the war, in the provinces of Liège, Namur, Luxembourg, and Brabant, that the Teuton hordes were at their most barbarous. More recently, either because they were so commanded or because they were glutted with cruelty, they have kept down their evil instincts. Their fury lasted two or three months. Perhaps the deliberate purpose of giving free rein to the army's rage was to annihilate the conquered race. Flanders was less violently and less persistently tortured than La Wallonie. The latter, by her very existence, was judged guilty. She was to blame

for not belonging to the Germanic race. She was not, as Flanders was, a district where ultimately there was chance of the German domination being accepted. The invaders knew that in her they would find an implacable enemy.

They have therefore not been satisfied with the devastation caused by their armies; they have now deliberately created a famine in southern Belgium. Now, in the full twentieth century and in Europe, there are cries of a people dying of hunger. Help pours in from all sides. America is splendid. But how far will these gifts go to satisfy the hunger of whole provinces? It is an unvarying rule that conquered territories must be provisioned by their conquerors. But the Germans recognize no duties in warfare. They are glad that those whom they have not been able to slaughter should die a death even more horrible. The fury against us felt by the German officers dates from the very day of the war's beginning. We barred their road to France. The act had no meaning, no honesty to them. True to their traditions, they sought to buy us off. Calling our government, as it were, into the

room behind the shop, they asked, "For how much?" And waited for the answer they expected, "For thirty pieces of silver."

But the answer was given by Liège, and Liège infuriated them. They lost thousands of men; by no means were they able to force the instant passage which was so essential to them. Behind our defence France was mobilizing. For England and for Russia we gained a precious respite.

The world jumped immediately to the conclusion that the fate of the war was already settling against Germany. Even this first check, given by a tiny nation in the cause of honour, was regarded as the death blow. Certainly there was talk of peace. Three separate times did Germany approach us with proposals. The first occasion was in August. M. Davignon, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, received through our minister at The Hague a long telegram which contained the following sentence: "The German government is ready to take any steps in order to have Belgium on her side in her war with France." Belgium's reply was prompt and definite:

"True to her international duties, Belgium can only repeat her answer to the ultimatum of August 2nd. And this especially as, since that time her territory has been violated, a terrible war has been carried into her lands, and the guarantors of her integrity have promptly and loyally responded to her appeal for help."

Germany's second attempt was through political channels in Belgium, but it failed as ignominiously as the first.

The third of the peace proposals was made by M. Eyschen, a politician of Luxembourg, who toured the neutral states, persuading them to issue a joint appeal for peace between us and Germany. Such a scheme could not have any result. Belgium, first of all, met it with a point-blank refusal. It could not be encouraging to M. Eyschen to read in a Belgian newspaper:

"If our government had wished it, we could have entered into negotiations with Germany. But our government did not so wish, and it will greet with the same refusal every ambassador or agent of the sovereign who, having invaded, devastated

and shed the blood of Belgium, having mocked her through a bribed and corrupted press, has dared, three times in succession, to offer his victim a peace without honour."

So, after violating our neutrality, Germany behaved as though positions were reversed. It was she, the great nation, that made advances to the little nation she had despoiled and outraged. She must have mistaken our power of resistance to decide thus rapidly to swallow her pride. In any case she acted with such characteristic delicacy and tact as to embarrass even her friends. Not for a moment did she suspect that a people who, in order to remain faithful to their honour, had not hesitated to undergo infinite sufferings and misery, would reject as an insult any talk of compromise or friendship. The Director of the Deutsche Bank, who was sent as emissary on the occasion of the second appeal, actually expostulated: "The Herr Baron von der Goltz is, after all, not a villain. He has no evil designs on Brussels. It would be so easy to talk matters over, and make some amicable arrangement. . . ."

Oh, the subtlety, the perception, the tact of

the German diplomats! With what elephant's feet do they pick their way about the great garden of human emotions!

I have also heard that they said:

"The Belgians should have accepted our peace propositions, even if it was only because they at least proved that we were sorry for the wrong we had done."

I do not know what blockhead uttered this argument, but his childish brain does not seem to have realized that Germany, stained with her crimes, will have very little right to plead repentance when she is deservedly chastised by the master-hand of the allies.

Germany has vented her rage, not only on human beings, but also on inanimate objects. Wood, stone, thatch, metal-work, anything that could be used for shelter or refuge, bore the brunt of her fury. Her soldiers carried special naphtha grenades, special packets of pitch to fit them for arson as well as for rifle shooting. Deliberate burnings took place all over. In the province of Luxembourg alone:

Neufchâteau shows 21 houses burnt; Etalle, 30; Houdemont, 64; at Rulles half the houses have been destroyed by fire; the

village of Ausart is entirely consumed; at Tintigny only 8 houses remain. Jamoigne is half destroyed; also Les Bulles. At Noyen 42 houses destroyed; Rossignol is entirely destroyed; Mussy la ville has 20 houses burnt; Bertrix, 15; at Bleid a great part of the village; at Signeulx a great part of the village; at Ethe five-sixths of the village have been burnt. Bellefontaine has 6 houses burnt; Mussin, half the village; at Baranzy only 4 houses remain; at Maissin only 36 out of 100; at Villance, 9. At Anlay 26 houses have been burnt.

So runs the report. The figures are minima. By a computation necessarily incomplete, the number of houses destroyed by fire exceeds 3,000. In every case, let it be noted, the houses were destroyed, not by the inevitable processes of warfare, but by deliberate and systematic incendiarism.

In Flanders and Brabant, Termonde, Malines, Alost, Aerschot, Dixmude, Nieuport, Ypres, Louvain are now mere ruins. They have been bombarded and rebombarded. The Belgian army had only to inflict the slighest check on the Germans, for the latter to shower

their shells once more either on Termonde, Malines, or Alost. The action suggests the punishment inflicted by some sinister schoolmaster. Always it was methodical, for everything is rigidly disciplined in Germany, even madness.

And these innumerable blazing towns shone like great torches on the doing of other deeds of crime. First, there were wholesale executions:

> At Dinant 700 civilians were slaughtered; at Andennes every official, and nearly all the prominent citizens. La Wallonie ran blood in her every village and her every town. In the province of Luxembourg alone, where so many houses were destroyed, the tale of murdered folk runs as follows: At Neufchâteau, 18 were shot; at Vance, 1; at Etalle, 30; at Houdemont, 11; at Tintigny, 157; at Bertrix, 2; at Ethe, 300 (while in all 530 persons have disappeared). At Latour only 17 men survive; at St. Léger 11 were shot; at Maissin, 10 men, 1 woman and a girl were shot, and 2 men and 2 young girls wounded. At Villance 2 men were shot, and 1 girl wounded; at Anlay 52 men

and women were shot; at Claireuse 2 men were shot and 2 hung.

After wholesale murder came wholesale deportation. Every man strong enough to work, gardeners, wood-cutters, miners, peasants, were sent off to work in Germany. The invaders succeeded thus in reviving the ancient custom of slavery. Terrible was the treatment these poor men received. The whip is a German national institution. The German eagle might be depicted holding it in his claws, as the American eagle grasps the lightning.

Stolen goods in piles were carried off over the Rhine—pictures, furniture, mirrors, pianos. Captain de Gerlache—the same who conducted the Belgian Antarctic expedition—has described in the Norwegian paper "Morgen Bladet," the sights he saw. His statements are supported by photographs taken by himself. At Malines the station was blocked with 700 pianos taken from the pillaged houses of the town. One of his friends, an important official, returning home, finds his house has been sacked. He asks to see the German governor. His neighbours have assured him that a party of German soldiers came pur-

posely to ransack his home. "They were peasants," puts in the governor. "They were your officers," replies the victim. The governor consents to follow the Belgian official to the station. There they discover the stolen goods. They have gone to swell the vast pile of belongings filched from neighbouring houses.

This story is typical. I could tell a hundred others.

Burning houses, stolen possessions, human beings driven into captivity, are a mere background for the better setting of the horrors which take the front of the stage. And this foreground is devoted entirely to the torture of old men, of women, and of children. Germany, for all her customary heavy clumsiness, developed, of a sudden, an amazing ingenuity. Cruelty stimulates her. A kind of horrible lyricism seizes her. She wallows in frightfulness.

German military usage—and the word is not used lightly—demands that an old man should walk in front of the soldiers, when they are going under fire. If, instead of this, the old man is judged likely to be of more

value as a hostage, German military usage deems it good to kill his sons before his eyes and to maltreat him to the utmost limit of exhaustion. If, again, a considerable number of old men are made prisoners, German military usage lays down that they shall be placed in a single line, forced to dig their own graves just behind the place at which they are ordered to stand, and then that they shall be shot in such a way that the bodies fall, of themselves, into the holes made. If, finally, the old man is a priest or a monk, German military usage recommends that he be first flogged and then hung.

In the case of women, German military usage inevitably orders rape or violation as a preliminary. Husband, brother, and child having been done to death, the wife, the sister, or the mother is given a spade and told to bury her dead. Pregnant women unfailingly receive the bayonet thrust in the womb. A woman engaged to be married is forcibly made one with her *fiancé*, bound tightly with cords and set in a pile of trusses of straw. A match is struck on a boot-sole, the straw crackles and blazes, and the young people end

their embrace in death. For women who are not pledged to marry, the German soldiers have another form of procedure. The following anecdote, proved and vouched for by the French Minister of war, may serve as example. The story has been related by Jean Bernard in the "Indépendance" for 2 January 1915.

The scene is a country-house near Antwerp. A merchant of the city has chosen to remain in his home, with his two daughters, aged respectively twenty and seventeen years. Both are beautiful, with that placidly joyful beauty that has distinguished Flemish women from the time of Rubens onwards. After the fall of Antwerp, the Germans spread about the neighbourhood and several officers quarter themselves on the merchant, who has had the rash courage to stay on in his country house. Being a man of means he receives them with all the hospitality possible. The most comfortable bedrooms are given up to them; for the first evening an abundant dinner is prepared. Five German officers sit down to this meal, at which there is every promise of plentiful wine as well as food. Unfortunately, however, drunkenness cannot be pleaded in

their defence. Before the feast begins at all, the German captain, the oldest and senior officer of the five, orders the owner of the house to be thrust into his own cellar, and the door guarded by two sentinels with loaded rifles and instructions to shoot, if necessary.

This precaution having been taken, the two girls are commanded by the revellers to undress. They protest, resist, implore. All in vain. As answer to their prayers the captain orders some of his men to strip them naked and hold them during the meal before the leering eyes of the diners. At last, sated with eating and pleasingly drunk, the savages, before the amused eyes of common soldiers, themselves reeling with drink, take the two poor children for their amusement. You will forgive me for not reproducing here the further details quoted by the Minister of War. It is enough to say that when, the following morning, the merchant was set free from his prison, his daughters had been handed over to the tender mercies of the common soldiery. One had gone raving mad; the other has since killed herself in shame and grief.

German military usage has methods also of

dealing with children. They have little hands that are delightfully easy to cut off. Their feet are barely attached to their legs at all. A little blood-spilling and the thing is done. But there are refinements. M. le Senateur Henry Lafontaine — Nobel prizeman and famed for moderation and pacificism—has testified in a public meeting that children's nostrils and children's ears have been burnt with the flaring stumps of lighted cigars.

The babe in the cradle is, of course, an ideal victim. He can be tortured and will tell no tales. I know well that one habit of German military usage is to deny proven facts and attribute the crimes immediately to the other side. But this method becomes daily less practicable. Too many horrors have been committed. The loathing roused is too deep and too universal. Too many mouths are crying aloud for vengeance. Their noise overbears and drowns the muttering of lies. It has become necessary for Germany to admit the least tinge of shame, the least suspicion of dishonour. So, German military usage now protests that a few examples had to be made, because the civil population fired on the

soldiery. It is unexplained in what way little children, young girls, or even old men could have assaulted the officers. As for the able-bodied men, they had handed over all their arms to the authorities of their communes; even sporting guns had been given up. One is forced to conclude that the shots, if any were fired, came from the Belgian or French armies in fair fight, or perhaps from the Germans themselves. M. Emile Van der Velde, Minister of State, has recently read aloud in public in London a letter from a German officer, who admits that at Huy a quarrel broke out among his own men and a shot was fired which killed a German soldier. Of course, the result was a massacre of the native civilians. What happened at Huy, concluded M. Van der Velde, happened at Louvain and at many places besides.

But why trouble to meet even this charge? What repressive measures can possibly justify the orgy of savagery and hate in which the invaders of Belgium wallowed? It is in the German character that reasons for such barbarity must be sought. Like some evil deformity of the brain, unfit for the light of day,

does that character now appear to Europe. The empire of William II has hired as mercenaries all the old curses of the world. "From plague, pestilence and famine, good Lord deliver us." Like our ancestors, we Belgians can utter that prayer to heaven. But to us the words mean one thing and one alone—Germany.

CEUX DE LIEGE

CEUX DE LIEGE

DUT la guerre mortelle et sacrilège
Broyer notre pays de combats en combats
Jamais sous le soleil, une âme n'oubliera
Ceux qui sont morts, pour le monde, là bas
A Liège

Ainsi qu'une montagne
Qui marcherait et laisserait tomber par chocs
Ses blocs,
Sur les villes et les campagnes
S'avançait la pesante et féroce Allemagne.

Ce fut un tragique moment
Les gens fuyaient vers l'inconnu, éperdûment;
Seuls ceux de Liège résistèrent
A ce sinistre écroulement
D'hommes et d'armes sur la terre.

S'ils agirent ainsi,
C'est qu'ils savaient qu'entre leurs mains étaient remis

Le sort
Et d'Athènes et de Rome, et de la France claire,
Et qu'il fallait que leurs efforts
Après s'être acharnés se doublassent encor
En des efforts plus sanguinaires.

Peu importait
Qu'en ces temps sombres,
Contre l'innombrable empire qu'ils affrontaient
Ils ne fussent qu'un petit nombre;
A chaque heure du jour
Défendant et leur ville, et ses forts tour à tour
Ils livraient cent combats parmi les intervalles;
Ils tuaient en courant, et ne se lassaient pas
D'ensanglanter le sol à chacun de leurs pas
Et d'être prompts sous les raffales
Des balles.
Même lorsque la nuit, dans le ciel sulfureux,
Un Zeppelin rôdeur passait au-dessus d'eux
Les désignant aux coups par sa brusque lumière,
Nul ne reculait, fut-ce d'un pas, en arrière;
Mais tous ils bondissaient d'un si farouche élan
En avant,
Que la place qu'ils occupaient demeurait vide
Quand y frappait la mort rapide.

A l'attaque, sur les glacis,
Quand, rang par rang se présentaïent les ennemis
Sous l'éclair courbe et régulier des mitrailleuses,
Un tir serré qui tout à coup se dilatait
Immensément les rejetaient
Et rang par rang les abattait
Sur la terre silencieuse.

Chaudfontaine et Lonçin et Boncelle et Barchon
Retentissaient du bruit d'acier de leurs coupoles,
Ils assumaient la nuit, le jour, sur leurs épaules
La charge et la tonnerre et l'effroi des canons.
A nos troupes couchées
Dans les tranchées,
Des gamines et des gamins
Distribuaient le pain
Et rapportaient la bière
Avec la bonne humeur indomptée et guerrière.
On y parlait d'exploits, accomplis simplement;
Et comme, à tel moment,
Le plus jeune des régiments
Fût, à tel point, fureur, carnage, et foudroyment
Que jamais troupe de guerre
Ne fut plus ferme et plus terrible sur la terre.

La ville entière s'exaltait
De vivre sous la foudre;
L'héroïsme s'y respirait
Comme la poudre;
Le cœur humain s'y composait
D'une neuve substance,
Et le prodige y grandissait
Chaque existance.
Tout s'y mouvait dans l'ordre intense et surhumain.

O vous, les hommes de demain,
Dût la guerre mortelle et sacrilège
Nous avoir écrasés dans un dernier combat,
Jamais, sous le soleil, une âme n'oubliera
Ceux qui sont morts pour le monde, là bas,
A Liège.

CHAPTER III

BELGIAN PRIDE

IT is the duty of Belgians to-day, however terrible their misfortunes have been, not to sink to mere complaining nor to dwell on their misery, but to prove themselves worthy of their soldiers, who have been, one and all, heroes.

The lamentations of women driven from their homes, forced to tread the highways of famine, flight, and exile, their children clinging to their skirts, are justified and truly pitiable. But it is not fitting that men, especially men who can think and act, should echo these cries, already somewhat over-prolonged.

In times before the war, those of us who dreamed of a greater Belgium had no visions of territorial expansion in Europe, nor of a colonial empire in Africa. What we pictured was a rebirth of Belgium, a rebirth essentially of the mind and spirit. We pictured certainly

an ever-growing activity of trade and industry, but our desire was even more for a greater modernity and vitality of thought. We sought for Belgium the power of influence rather than of conquest.

And now we see the influence of Belgium stronger than it has ever been. It is true that for the moment our factories are silent, apparently deprived of the panting breath which is their life. But no one really thinks them dead. As soon as the war is over they will spring to life again, the wonderful monsters that they were before. The weight of dust and ashes that now covers them will be a light burden to their thousands of tentacles, when once again they spring, in their twisted energy, to the light of day.

As ever, we Belgians shall be young and keen. Until to-day our nation has known no danger. We were too sure of the morrow. We lived like rich people who had no knowledge of want. War, we thought, was the business of others.

But war has come upon us, fierce and terrible, when least we expected it. Like a great mountain, crashing downward, the em-

pire of William Hohenzollern has overwhelmed us. We were alone; we were few. We were attacked with treachery and lies. Into the old forts of Liège we threw ourselves in desperate haste. We had, as it were, to invent courage and resource for ourselves; we had to manufacture a tragic spirit of resistance. All that we did in a day, an hour, a moment. And in that moment we won the admiration of the world.

Oh, what unforgettable impromptus were that courage and that glory! Some of us, seeing the little bands of men leaving for the frontier, could not but doubt. "They will be but fodder for cannon. We have no army, no generals, no fortresses."

And four days later a name, unknown a few hours ago, was in every mouth. The boys in the streets dressed up as General Leman. Girls sold his portrait in every town. The personality of a true General had stamped itself upon the mind of everyone. Nor was this all. The same little bands of soldiers, whom we had pitied as destined only to feed the hostile cannon, came to Brussels, their hands full of Prussian sabres, at once timid

and triumphant, still unconvinced of the great part they had just played. The women kissed them; the men carried them in triumph.

One of them, when a "Taube" hovered threateningly over Brussels, thrust into the air a Prussian eagle, torn from some German helmet, and, with a laugh of mocking rage, taunted the aviator to come down and fetch it. Splendid moments, alive with all the fever of pride! The weather was brilliant, the very air seemed golden. One breathed in heroism with the sunlight.

These early triumphs of Liège, and those that followed at Haelen and the Yser, have won for Belgium the eternal honour, respect and admiration of all. For three months we have held the vast German armies in our country; the armies that allotted to us three days. With the most convincing arguments of all we have challenged the dogma of their invincibility. We have caused them their first losses. Like moving blocks, the men thrust elbow to elbow against each other, they advanced towards the glacis of our forts. Before giving the actual assault, together they shouted—"Kaiser!" "Kaiser!"

And the Belgian guns answered them. They fell, row upon row, like dominoes. Sometimes the swift flashlight of a cruising airship lit up their agony. A great murmuring groan spread along the lines, died away and gave place to the silence of death.

The force of our resistance gave time to France and to England to arm themselves, to perfect their organization, but it is not for us to harp on this. More important still is what lies behind.

Our handful of soldiers at Liège and at Haelen represented, unconsciously of course, a great past of cultured civilization. If the French-speaking race is the incarnation of both Greece and Rome, we can assert that these soldiers of ours defended and upheld their inherited traditions, at the moment when they were most seriously threatened. That is why this simple act of courage is so great. We need not dread comparing their exploit to the deeds at Thermopylæ. At Liège, as in Sparta, a handful of men saved the world.

With the memory of this supreme service rendered to Western civilization in our

minds, we should have no feeling but pride. Tears dishonour us. Let us rather be thankful that Belgium, of all the countries, was chosen to do this wonderful deed, was privileged to be the first and the most vital rampart of modern civilization against savagery and brutal aggression, and that her name in future will be joined to those few small nations whose fame is immortal. Let us further rejoice that in these tremendous days our people have lived with an intensity that makes all our past existence as a nation seem valueless in comparison. It seems that before this sudden baptism of fire we were hardly a nation at all. We frittered away our strength in petty squabbles; we argued over words instead of facts; we blamed each other for being Walloon or Flemish; we busied ourselves as lawyers, business men, officials, instead of striving before all to be proud and free citizens of one State. Danger rather than safety has been our cure. We have discovered ourselves. So strong is the union, so tenacious the bonds of a common resistance that now bind us together, that to many minds Belgium dates only from yesterday,

and has never felt herself so real, so living as when, deprived of her land, she has, as rallying point for her national consciousness, only her King.

CHAPTER IV

ALBERT THE WELL-BELOVED

THOSE who knew him before he came to the throne, though they believed firmly in him, yet wondered a little how he would develop. He comes of a royal stock that have always reached a late maturity. Leopold I won his reputation as European arbitrator at the age of fifty; Leopold II was at first kept in check by his famous ministers, Rogier and Frère-Orban, and he had to throw off their tutelage before he could stand out as the man who, by bringing Western civilization into Africa, gave the world, as it were, the gift of a new continent. Alike, the first and second kings of Belgium started their public careers with diffidence and hesitation.

What awakening was in store for their successor? As Crown Prince, Albert gave his attention to social and military questions. He talked sparingly, but no one who had the

privilege of speaking with him could fail to notice the thoroughness with which he had studied and learnt. As King, he would certainly have carried through vigorous reforms, both economic and democratic. Indeed, he was plainly heading towards striking changes when suddenly the war broke upon us.

I shall never forget that fourth of August, nineteen hundred and fourteen. I saw the King go into the Parliament House and I saw him coming out. He had taken counsel with the representatives of his people, on the eve of his and their blood-stained Easter Day.

And indeed it was, for us Belgians, nothing short of an Easter morning. It was our resurrection. War was upon us. Everywhere was fear and anguish. On our frontier a torrent of men and munitions threatened the old defences of Liège. We were a handful against a multitude, and could have no hope of victory; only in resisting as best we might lay our chance of glory. We did our duty, and in the simple doing of it we were born again. Pride, determination, courage, self-denial, all the qualities which had lain hidden under our riches and our prosperity, sprang

suddenly to light. In a few weeks the little Belgian people became a great nation.

The word "motherland" had been for most of us a mere catchword for official harangues and popular songs. We were very far from being Chauvinist. Indeed, a large number of our best citizens actually regretted that they belonged to so tiny a country. Some would have preferred to be French, others English, others even—those whom we called Flamingants—German. To-day all such regrets and longings have vanished. We are all Belgians and ask nothing better; Belgians, fiercely almost, and until death. For our country is now our religion.

And our King is the symbol of this resurrection of Belgium. Alone, of all the kings and emperors concerned in this war, he has been one with his soldiers, sharing their danger and their glory. He has lived in the trenches, eating and smoking as his simple troopers eat and smoke; he has shown a quiet courage, a resistance, and a strength at once vigorous and profound. Among his generals and his officers he has more than once shown the qualities of a far-sighted and forceful tac-

tician; his suggestions have been adopted and have proved successful. The darker and more cruel was the outlook, the more reliable and decisive has he shown himself to be. The war might have been made solely that Albert could come to a consciousness of himself, that he might leave behind him his hesitation and his reserve, and take his place, not after but by the side of his noble predecessors. Leopold I was a diplomat; Leopold II was a colonizer and a business man; Albert has shown himself a soldier.

He is as triumphantly a soldier as the German Emperor is not. From the outset of the war this has been clearly evident. Their very proclamations were different. William II, with his mystic rhetoric and parade of literary grandiloquence, strives to impose himself by wonder and not by sharing in the fight. Albert's words are few and sincere. He speaks in order himself to take a gun and hasten to meet the enemy. From him come no appeals to heaven; he goes neither as God's ambassador nor the favourite of the Virgin Mary. He puts a simple trust in Providence and, for the rest, relies on his

own courage and on the strength of his arm.

For him no basking in the gaudy flattery of a court. For him no schemes of triumphal entries; he is no Lohengrin at the royal yacht's prow. Sparing of words, he strikes no useless attitudes. He even prefers going on foot to horseback.

In manner he is gentle, diffident. He welcomes you with a cheery handshake. Conversation begins slowly, but once the banalities and embarrassments of the first words are left behind, it thrives and develops. The King is informed on all subjects. He is no poet, but he will recall a verse here and there remembered in his reading. The Belgian artistic renaissance of recent years has found him a warm and enthusiastic supporter. He understands and helps. He is the first of our kings to make mention of art in a speech from the throne.

Albert I is beloved by the mass of his people as a "beau gars." No King-cripple will ever be popular in Belgium. Our sovereign must be able to wield a sword in both hands. Albert is massive and healthily large. He is

the incarnation of the Flemish and Walloon idea of beauty, which is never separated from strength. His people know that, at need, their King would be a stalwart boon-companion at the Kermesses. No nation is more attached to the idea of equality than the Belgians. The pomp and arrogance of the Germans are intolerable to us. Only to see in Brussels a German officer pass by, especially to see the solemn prancing of the goose-step, is sufficient to realize that the popular commonsense of the Bruxellois condemn such sights as the posturing of folly itself. Albert is a soldier without parade or mannerism. His simplicity is exactly the quality that commands the greatest love and veneration. No one can impose admiration on the Belgians; they give it to whom they will.

In the achievement of his popularity, rapid from the beginning and by now strikingly established, the King has been throughout helped by his wife. She understood immediately the actions, the words, the virtues that her position demanded. Her weapons were shyness, gentleness, and tact. She was be-

loved of artists as well as of the common people. She is herself a musician, but her interest and love for art embraced also literature and painting. She surrounded herself with carefully chosen pictures and statues, whose creators were among her friends. In the royal palace at Brussels she had furnished three or four of the salons after her own taste. The gilding, the pillars, the lustres, the official candelabra were all swept away. The walls were decorated in plain colours, and on them with penetrating taste she hung a few pictures by young Belgian artists. These pictures she would defend against attacks, and those who were fortunate enough to be able to talk frankly with her knew that she was interested in any genuine artistic novelty. She asked nothing better than to be convinced by fresh ideas.

This war has shown to the world the extent to which she, more than anyone else, helped the King. She was at his side during those tragic days when Antwerp was besieged; and later, while tremendous battles were thundering along the Flemish coast, she stayed faithfully by the side of the man who is at once her husband and her friend. In appearance she is

slight, almost fragile, but how eager and fearless is the spirit that animates her frail body!

One hour before she was leaving Brussels for Antwerp, it was my privilege to pay her a visit. Her palace, into which, three days later, the enemy was to enter in triumph, was half turned into a hospital. She expressed the determination to pay one last visit to the wounded soldiers. She was calm, imperturbable; no word of complaint or even sadness passed her lips. And after this final visitation she went out in all the strength of faith to meet the unknown.

The future should indeed smile on such a Queen and on such a King. Gloomy German historians in vain deny the nobility of their actions and their thoughts; for the admiration and affection of their united people will go with them down the ages. On their side they have youth, strength of purpose, suffering, unconquerable courage of soul. In themselves they are splendid. They have already their page of history, they will soon have their chapter of legend.

CHAPTER V

THE LITTLE VILLAGES OF FLANDERS

ENGLAND is a vast meadow, sprinkled here and there with spaces of tillage. Flanders is like a chess-board, the various squares of which are covered with rye, wheat, oats, flax and clover. From scattered farms, little red-roofed, white-gabled buildings, with their green doors and shutters, their clean, warm stables, comes the cheerful noise of flails threshing the wheat, of wheels ginning the flax.

Life is a simple and peaceful thing in these villages. The church is, as it were, the palace of God. Many coloured statues of the saints, gold, silken banners are lavished on its beautifying. The organ plays daily for those who wish to hear. On great festivals the altars are loaded with silver candlesticks, the finest vestments adorn the shoulders of the priests,

the best voices of the district thunder the Christmas hymn or the Easter alleluia. A quiet reverence rules over all. Every ceremony has its beauty, and their joyful dignity affects the life of the tiniest hamlet.

The beauty of Flanders is the mellow beauty of many centuries. Everywhere may be found firmly established traditions or historical masterpieces. In every little church a picture, either Gothic or Renaissance, recalls the age of Van Eyck or of Rubens. The subject may be the coronation of a fair Virgin, or the ascent to heaven, surrounded by angels, of a splendid Christ. The saints are represented, garlanded with roses. The Holy Families are Flemish families, living quietly prosperous lives in cool white rooms, with their bird in its cage or their parrot on its perch.

Such is the decorative side of the Flemish village. In actual plan it consists probably of a single principal street, in which live the lawyer, the doctor and the brewer; and a few smaller roads which branch off from the main street as from the trunk of a tree. Wherever such a side-road joins the main street, a statue

of the Virgin Mother of Jesus stands in a niche of the wall, and it is the constant care of the ladies of the village, the wives of the lawyer, the doctor and the brewer, to keep each shrine in Spring well-adorned with fresh flowers.

Once a week the market is held in the square or round about the church. The farmers come to sell their milk and butter; their boys bring in young pigs, and sometimes sheep; the vendors of cloth display their little stocks. The business done is small enough, no doubt, and its basis narrow, but the markets at least create a certain weekly excitement and keenness of rivalry.

But at the Kermesses this excitement and keenness becomes a kind of madness. In every cabaret is the sound of music. Dancing-halls open on every side. Harsh and violent orchestras—a cornet, a violin, a clarionet, a trumpet—flog into swirling motion a hundred sturdy couples. Quadrilles follow polkas or waltzes, and the dancers stamp with their heels so violently that often the tiles of the floor are split in two. Drunkenness and anger play their part at these times of wild

pleasure. Knives flash out in quarrel, and often bloody work is done. The farm-lads fighting for wenches' favours; the lovers quarrelling, the old men, feverish with drink, present, almost unchanged, the violent orgies painted so long ago by Brouwer and Cræsbeke.

Such is, or rather such was, before the Germans came, the life of the little villages of Flanders, Brabant, Hainault and Liège. But anyone who might see these districts now would find it hard to believe in such a past.

The newspapers keep the world informed of the fate of the towns; but they do not trouble themselves about the tiny villages, hidden away in the heart of the country. I know secret corners in the Ardennes, in la Hesbaye, in la Famenne, in le Borinage, in Flanders, in Brabant, where the peasants are literally starving to death. In time of peace they live, these poor folks, on the produce of their little farms. They kill their pig, cure it and eat it slowly, week by week, throughout the winter. They have their little store of potatoes in their cellar and their twenty sacks of corn in their barn. For

years and years they have always lived thus. Their whole world is their little house, tucked away, over there in the distant country. It represents all their treasure, all their livelihood. They toil all the summer so that bread and meat shall not be wanting in the hard times of winter. They are, as it were, a Providence to themselves. They hope and are confident. They cannot conceive any law, divine or human, depriving them of what they have reaped and garnered, of the living they have amassed, lawfully and by their own toil, for their wives and children.

When the war began little groups of Uhlans began appearing in the villages. They would stop and ask a few questions and then go on somewhere else. At present they behaved mildly enough. Well aware of the danger of ambushes, they were gentle and genial. They seemed to regard the people almost as their friends. Fear bred in them excellent manners.

But later on, when whole regiments passed the way that hitherto only scattered Uhlans had trod, the true German arrogance made its terrible appearance. There was looting

and worse; there was massacre. Conciliatory fear gave way to savagery. The world knows now how much blood must be shed, how many ruins must be piled one on another, before German anger can be assuaged.

And now that the fires have smouldered out, now that the little villages are once more left lonely, and those of their inhabitants who have escaped flame and sword are left there to exist as best they may, it is for us to think for a moment of the sinister silence of those abandoned lives, lingering on in the little towns and, more tragic still, lost in the depths of the countryside.

Here, in the fog of London, I sit and picture to myself the agony of one of those little villages of Campine or of the Ardennes, over there, hidden among the valleys or lost in the marshes. Every one of those sources of livelihood of the poor peasants, which I have described, has been requisitioned or frankly stolen. Their few poor cows have been killed. Their sow, who once like some prolific savage beast dawdled among the manure and filth of the farmyard with her squealing turbulent litter, has been snatched away these three

months. In payment was given a ticket, a ticket of exchange valid in a distant land. But this is not all. Their sacks of corn have been brought from their barns, their turnips have been taken away from the pits in which they were kept. Their straw and hay have become the property of the invading cavalry, who, no sooner had they taken what they needed, hastened away. The farmsteads are stripped bare; only their inhabitants remain, deprived of everything. Even their bed-coverings, their poor mattresses, their bedsteads have been seized. And they remain, with no possessions in the world but the four walls of their cottage and the tiles of their roof.

How are they to live henceforth? They have never learnt to seek a livelihood elsewhere or otherhow than in their homes and on their farms. The towns are far away, and even the roads to them are often strange. While finally, did they but know it, little help can come to them out of the towns, themselves looted and even sacked, and their shops and houses deserted and shuttered.

At least for the towns there is hope. In them remains such authority as still survives.

Some organization is slowly emerging. Neighbouring communes help each other. Such provisions as are sent in from abroad come to the towns. Whenever there is concerted effort there is some chance of being heard and helped. Even in the little towns men will receive some succour, will hearten each other. Perhaps a stump of railway line still connects them with the world. At least, carts pass through their streets. Some energetic citizen contrives to form a tiny store of precious food, and its existence sends a gleam of hope through even the darkest gloom. At least everything is not dead and desolate.

But the villages. They have no initiative. To them no help comes. Their cry is solitary, and dies away unechoed. The cottages are scattered about the country, barely in communication with one another. They are to me like little islands of starvation and distress looming faintly through the mist.

Should not those of us, who have a real pity for the unprecedented disasters which have overtaken Belgium, bear in mind especially the despair of the peasant? His silence covers the greatest misery of all; for, despite

his desolation, he does not complain. And yet he has given his three or four sons to his country, and they are far away from him, in the midst of the horrors, but where, and whether dead or alive, he does not know.

This Christmas night I can see him, sitting as usual before the hearth, but this year a hearth that is cold and black. Because his arms are forbidden to toil, it is his thought which blunders to and fro, seeking hope in his disaster. This toil-worn, silent man, who was a hero at the moment when his country needed heroism, is faced now with an inevitable death, here in his house, here in the house in which his father lived before him. He is utterly lonely, utterly helpless. Lost in the distant plains, he feels himself lost in the utter distance of the world.

O—is human pity so narrow, so hampered, that it cannot reach its hand over there into Flanders or La Wallonie, and bring some succour to that silent, uncomplaining man, who, to-morrow, perhaps, may be no more?

CHAPTER VI

PERVYSE

I LEFT England by the Folkestone cross-channel steamer to Boulogne, where a motor-car was awaiting me. We started at once. Our speed rapidly became very great, and we flew past ammunition waggons and hospital carriages without any checking of our course. Whenever we met other motor-cars, we heard the same sharp, violent clatter that is caused by two trains that cross each other at high speed. Already we had lost thought of our own safety.

For the moment there is no administrative frontier between France and Belgium. The Customs officers have turned soldiers. The *Douane* is no more. Only the sign-post remains. But all the same the way is constantly barred and controlled. Two waggons drawn up, one on each side of the road, and piled about with objects of every kind, leave only a

very narrow passage free between them. This passage is guarded by soldiery. We are challenged, and shout the password into the wind. The car is off again on its headlong career.

Adinkerke first and then Furnes. The little town is full of troops. They are lodged in the churches of S. Nicholas and S. Walburga. Along the walls are beds of straw. Above each bed, built into the walls themselves, rise tombstones, great slabs on which one can just decipher, blurred by time, the names of men and women long dead. Alike their many virtues, their titles, and even their dates, are fading into illegibility and oblivion.

But little thought of the gruesome chance that has set their beds upon graves troubles the soldiers who now sprawl on the straw in the golden sunlight. They eat and are merry. The statue of S. Nicholas stands below the throne; a cartridge belt is slung over his pastoral staff.

The little town of Furnes throbs with movement. All day long motor-cars flash through her streets. Her former silence has utterly vanished. In the main square little perambulating stall-shops dispense a poor but precious

tobacco. Each morsel is weighed with the utmost care. It is raining now, and the rain makes the tobacco heavy with damp. The good man therefore gives to every soldier client a pinch of overweight.

"The bad weather, you see," he says, "and also I am a good patriot, and I love soldiers."

And now the road to Pervyse stretches in front of us, bordered with trees either lopped off short, or twisted as in agony. Huge pits yawn in the meadows on either side. Perhaps there are twenty shells at the bottom, all of which have failed to explode. A gunner tells me that when a shell falls, the cattle lumber away in terror. But in a few moments, urged by their insatiable curiosity, they draw timidly near once more, and peer into the hole the shells have made. The ground is soft, and from time to time a cow falls in on the top of the shells. It struggles madly to get out of the pit, and the soldiers near by are always afraid that, trampling on the pile of powder and bullets, its hoofs will awake the slumbering anger of the unexploded shells.

Here and there, in mid-field or near a tree, is a rough cross. A kepi, a handful of

faded flowers, mark these graves of noble men. Further on there are dead horses lying.

It is on entering Pervyse that we get the first sight of real horror. The main street is like a great museum of prehistoric fauna. The house-roofs, denuded of tiles and the joists left naked, have tilted forward on to the side walks, so that they hang in mid air like giant vertebrae. Behind them the ruins of walls and gables suggest huge skeletons shattered and broken.

Through the windows one can see the poor furniture of poor households. The beds have been ripped open, the stoves upset, so that they lie with their feet in the air. Perhaps the Christ from the chimney corner has been hurled to the ground, while St. John and the Virgin have remained unscathed by the falling shells. I saw one little First Communion wreath torn to pieces by bullets, so that its white rose petals lay scattered among the soot and the fallen plaster.

One house only of the whole village of Pervyse has been spared. Its owner has seen no reason for going away. He is a man of middle age. As he watches us pass without

saying a word, he holds in his hands an enormous broom. For it was Saturday, and this man, amidst the total ruin of his village, was punctually cleaning his window and the pavement before his door, because the following day was Sunday. Could there be a better example of the proverbial Flemish cleanliness, even in times of war and universal disaster?

We take our way towards Nieuport, passing by Coxyde. In this country of dunes, where the sand swept before the wind tingles in our faces, the Arabs and the Senegalese have pitched their encampment. Were it not for the bitter cold they might think themselves in their own desert. On the summit of one little hill a mounted sentinel stands out in profile. Amazing the impression of this tropical silhouette against the stormy and cloud-laden northern sky. Indeed, a piece of Africa welded on to a piece of Flanders.

On all sides the cannon is thundering. Five yards away is a French battery. Methodically the charge is slipped into the gun, and time after time those near are deafened with the noise of the shot that follows. Urged by pride and admiration, the spectator draws nearer to

look. The desire seizes him to expose himself suddenly, without reason, high up on a mound near by, in full view of the enemy. The desire for danger becomes a passion as strong as that of love. One is intoxicated with the smell of powder and the sense of peril. One is ashamed not to be able, like the others, forthwith to risk one's life. I believe that heroism is learnt in a flash or never learnt at all.

We now approach the trenches themselves. They lie across a road near a station, barring the way. Bending ourselves double, we crawl into the kind of dungeons in which our soldiers sleep, eat and smoke away the time. Under a sort of pent-house is the gun. A lighted match flickers on the gleaming copper. The soldiers are in excellent spirits; as we shake hands with them they laugh. Their clumsy jokes fall on the Germans like clods of earth. For two days now this trench has been left in peace. The enemy is bombarding alternately Dixmude and Nieuport. It seems that whim alone decides the direction of his fire. Since his disaster at the Yser, there is no sign of ordered plan in his efforts. He makes a noise,

seemingly with no object beyond maintaining terror.

We take our way back by Ramscapelle. Everywhere the same scenes of desolation that we saw at Pervyse. The streets are littered with debris of glass and tiles. Mattresses, blankets, even table-cloths, curtains, and sheets, are stuffed into the window sashes.

Suddenly, from a cellar, we hear the cry of a cat. We grope our way down towards the sound, but the animal, lean and wretched, flees at our approach.

The shells have played strange havoc at Ramscapelle. Shots have forced their way into the houses, and out again, where one would least expect. Their fantastic course can be followed. One door is so riddled with bullets, that it seems a veritable colander. As at Pervyse, the church roof has collapsed, and the tower is a great skeleton of stone, through which, in the falling evening, I can see the stars.

All this was the terrible side of the battle front in Flanders, but my soul was indeed exalted by the calm courage of the soldiers, and the endurance of the population.

One mourns, of course, to see ruins piled

one on another with such hate and fury; but the sorrow is soon passed. Even the humblest peasants seem to treasure in their hearts a sombre reserve of energy. They go about their work methodically, as though the war was only an evil dream, and that the real importance lay in the waking.

From the ashes of these towns and villages a new and splendid life will arise. The library of Louvain will be rebuilt, the church of St. Pierre, the Market Hall of Ypres, the towers of Dixmude and Nieuport, and each stone will be set in its place with mortar as hard and as solid as is the hatred which now we feel for Germany.

Those who have died at Ypres, at Dixmude, and at Nieuport, will be for ever glorious in our history. Their tombs will be sacred. The smallest village of the Flemish coast will have in its little cemetery a kind of underground school, from which children may learn the traditions of a race as unchanging as water, and as tenacious as fire.

CHAPTER VII

DIXMUDE, NIEUPORT, YPRES

ONLY from afar could I see them, these little towns of my beloved Flanders, Dixmude, Nieuport, Ypres, as in the wind and rain of last autumn I made my way toward the allied front. From England, through Boulogne, Calais, Gravelines, Dunkirk, I travelled to reach that tiny corner of land which was all that remained of my native country. With an emotion compounded of joy, grief, determination, and pride, was my heart stirred as I saw that little strip of Flemish coast. I wept and laughed in one moment; never before had I felt so keenly the nearness of my race. I longed, if only for a moment, to evoke within myself the spirit of all my ancestors, so that I might love Flanders with a hundred hearts instead of one. This desire to increase my personality became positively a suffering, until during a few moments of silence I felt myself exalted, comforted, almost sublime.

When first I saw the shells they were falling on Nieuport Bains. As they struck the ground, a dense column of black smoke bellied upwards and outwards. At night they flashed about the sky like lightning. It was at once horrible and beautiful.

Nieuport Bains is merely a row of modern houses, pretty enough in their way, built along a breakwater of stone and brick. Nieuport town, however, is a place of silence and loveliness; a place of little houses, their windows shyly curtained; where now and again, as a step passes along the street, a hand pushes the curtains aside, discreetly curious. The pavements are uneven, their stones framed in grass or moss. The old church in the charming little square is surrounded with great trees which throw their solid circular shadows on the ground. Finally, right on the edge of the town, the huge Templar's tower rears its enormous head above the countryside. It is like a great monolith, or even some fragment of an Egyptian temple. I know of no stranger or more unexpected sight than this square colossus which towers over the roads and fields of Flanders, like a monument of all the

grandeur and nobility of the heroic past. It stands for strength and endurance, as though by its example it would raise the present to the level of the times gone by. Firm in the accomplishment of this tremendous mission, it defies all attacks. In vain have the German guns thundered against it. They have failed to throw it down because the ideal for which it stands shall outlast, in its nobility, the machine-made terror of their rage.

The jewel of Dixmude, besides the great square dominated by an old and splendid church, is the Béguinage, a tiny cloistered thing where one lives as at the end of the earth. Indescribable is the air of isolation in this place. The old alms-women, not more than three or four in the morning, perhaps five or six in the afternoon, move slowly across the paths of the central enclosure, each one at her appointed and unvarying hour. Their white caps accentuate the gentleness of their faces like a peaceful halo. Behind the little windows other tired and aged women busy themselves with the work of their tiny households. In the summer they take the air, sitting at their doorways. In winter they sit, seemingly

without moving, in their chairs before their little fires, their only companion an ancient book of prayers. They have their treasure and their happiness in the regular monotony of their lives. A stretch of white wall, a crucifix above the mirror, a statuette of some saint upon the mantelshelf, a few straw-seated chairs, each with its rush mat in front of it, these make up the modest idea of cleanliness and comfort proper to the place. Surely, if the Blessed Virgin came back to earth, it is in some such place as this that She would choose to dwell, some such community as this of quiet and holy thoughts, in which to pass Her life now that Her Son is dead. . . .

Ypres has a past quite different from that of Nieuport or Dixmude, a past of war and magnificence. Her main square, next to that of Brussels, is the most beautiful in the world. Her Town Hall, her Cathedral, her Market Hall, combine all the splendours. The Town Hall and Cathedral are assuredly beautiful, but the Market Hall is more than that, for it is unique. Its severity, its length, the symmetry of its lines, its roofs like great wings feathered with slates, its soaring and massive walls,

suggest a giant triumphal arch. It is so large that in times of peril the whole town could gather there for shelter. Inside, an artist (but for his modesty his name should now be one of glory), has spent a lifetime over twenty frescoes, each one alive with the spirit of the town's history. His name is Delbeck. In no dictionary of the celebrities of his time is there mention either of his birth or his death. He lived his humble life, passing year after year inside a famous building, with no ambition except to avoid dishonouring by his art the great walls that had been entrusted to his care. And he achieved his wish, for, so far from dishonouring the walls, he has made them more precious and more tragic by his graciously coloured pictures of famous citizens, of noble counts, of grave and learned judges.

The Market Hall of Ypres has always been a communal building. In the middle ages it was the business centre of the cloth makers, the weavers, the fullers. It has seen popular revolts and rioting. It has known agony and passion, joy and pride. For centuries it has stood there, the wonder of Ypres.

Unlike Bruges, Ypres has never decked

herself out as a museum. Bruges, in the same way as Nüremberg, is a trap for tourists. She erects modern reproductions of old buildings, so that the unwary visitor may take them for real antiquities. At Ypres there is no deceit. The town makes no archaeological toilette to tempt the innocent stranger. The present grows out of the past, and the marks of the grafting are left unconcealed. In that is honesty and loyalty.

Such were, before the war, these three beautiful little towns of Flanders by the sea. They were a calm and glorious trinity. To say the name of one of them immediately brought to the mind those of the other two. The sea loved them. She swept towards them with a murmur of waves; the tremendous booming song of her equinoctial winds was their lullaby. Their towers gazed out over the sandhills to where the great ships were passing by in the open sea. They dominated a fertile land rescued long ago by our Flemish ancestors from the very waves themselves. Fine roads, bordered with willows, lead from Ypres to Dixmude, from Dixmude to Nieuport. The three towns asked only to live at peace in the sunshine.

But they have been chosen to endure the noise and the terror of great guns.

To-day they are heaps of ruins. Photographs taken during the many bombardments show the Market Hall of Ypres in flames. Between the slates a curl of smoke, then the ragged tongues of flame, and the whole building is a blaze. The belfry still stands, a kind of Hercules presiding at the funeral pyre. But before long it also will totter and remain only a huge stone skeleton, never more to hold the great clock, which was its soul.

At Dixmude, in the principal church, a masterpiece of Jordaens stood over the altar. It showed the Adoration of the Magi. In the background of the picture, humbly bowed, appeared the good St. Joseph. Flemish peasants, mockingly irreverent, taunt his humility, while in the foreground is displayed all the splendour of the Orient. Strikingly typical of the Flemish spirit, at once mystic and sensual, is the blend of buffoonery and reverence in one picture. Who knows whether the painting still exists? It has succumbed, perhaps, to the German shells. Or is it now on its way to Berlin, where

a place is prepared for it on the walls of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum?

Ypres, Nieuport, and Dixmudé should be able to claim a right to special consideration among the towns of Belgium, when the time of reconstruction arrives. They have been grievously proved; their torture has been the cruellest. They were undefended; it seems incredible that they should have been sought out by fate, in their distant corner of Flanders, to meet a fiery martyrdom.

Far more than Ghent or Bruges or Antwerp, they had remained purely Flemish. Each had its dialect, clear and sonorous, expressive of the Flemish soul in a way that the toneless and official culture of a great town's dialect can never be. War has dragged them brutally from the silence that they loved. They ask no better than to go back thither, into a silence that is not the dead abandonment of a German domination, but the gentle silence of the real Flanders that has lain upon them through the ages.

GUILLAUME II

GUILLAUME II

LES soirs de fête, en des banquets,
Il s'évoquait
A la lueur de candélabres;
Son buste chargé d'or dans l'or étincelait
Et son verbe emphatique et farouche jonglait
Ou bien avec son casque ou bien avec son sabre.

Il sévissait, pareil à l'aquilon,
De l'un à l'autre bout de son empire énorme;
Il paradait de large en long,
Coiffé, sanglé, botté du front jusqu'aux talons.
Pourtant, bien qu'il le décorât des cent galons
De ses cent uniformes,
Son bras gauche restait obstinément difforme.

Il était l'Empereur estropié,
Dont les gestes font pitié
Dès qu'il parle des ailes grandes
De l'aigle allemande;
Il était l'Empereur, mais demeurait celui
Qu'assiègent les grands rêves

Et qui ne parvient pas à soulever le glaive
A deux mains, devant lui.

Son mysticisme dur, violent et rapace
Prenait la foudre à Dieu pour en frapper
l'espace;
L'hypocrisie armait son esprit puritain;
Il ordonnait et déplorait la tragédie
Du massacre éclairé par le rouge incendie;
Pendant qu'il brûlait Reims, il pleurait sur
Louvain;
Son orgueil, comme un bloc, se carrait sur la terre
Et le seul froncement de son sourcil hautain
Lui paraissait devoir angoisser le mystère
Et mater le destin.

De la Flandre jusqu'en Crimée
Retentissait le pas scandé de ses armées;
Il leur apparaissait debout dans son manteau,
Leur imposant de triompher coûte que coûte;
Mais dès qu'il prétendait et les guider
Et seul les commander,
Aussitôt la déroute
Poussait au long des routes
La fuite oblique et la frayeur de ses drapeaux.

Ses régiments?—il les dressait à coups de botte;
La schlague?—il la disait âprement patriote;
Un morne automatisme animait seul l'essor
Des bataillons compacts qu'il jetait vers la mort.
Dites, pour broyer à la fois France et Belgique,
Dites, depuis quels temps
Préparait-il ses peuples allemands
A sa guerre pédagogique?

Hier à Jérusalem, et demain à Tanger,
Et plus tard à Bagdad, et puis un jour en Chine,
Le monde était pour lui comme un tremplin léger
Où s'exerçaient son pied, sa jambe et son échine.

Au Nord, les soirs d'été, il se croyait pareil
Aux paladins casqués des légendes insignes.
Parfois, il s'affublait en Lohengrin vermeil
Et son yacht, sur la mer, voguait, blanc comme un cygne.

Il s'employait partout, fantasque et affairé
Et ne se doutait pas, en son âme étourdie,
Que de tout ce qui est simple, noble et sacré
Il était la coupable et morne parodie.

Son fils, sec et fluet, était plus fol encor:
Bien qu'il mêlât Dieu sait quels vices de caserne

Avec un goût étrange et sombre pour la mort,
On le disait strict et moderne.
Sa lourde joie était de n'être pas manchot
Et de pouvoir, même à deux poings, mater le trot
De ses caracolants chevaux
Quand il se pavanait aux côtés de son père;
Certains déjà le préféraient secrètement
Et l'avouaient dans le mystère.
Pourtant,
Bien qu'ils fussent l'un de l'autre le châtiment,
Fils et père se renvoyaient, publiquement,
La gloire
Et d'être l'un pour l'autre un soleil dans l'histoire,
Et de se compléter par leur rayonnement.

Mais leur peine à tous deux était certe infinie,
Quand ils fouillaient en vain leur cerveau et leur cœur
Dans l'espoir d'y trouver au moins quelque lueur
De génie;
Ils ne se disaient rien, car tous deux comprenaient;
L'Empereur, tout à coup, rageait et fulminait,
Et dans un geste large il jetait son délire
Comme mesure à son empire;

Il se voulait grand quand même, dès aujourd'hui;
Son peuple et ses soldats s'affoleraient en lui;
Ils formeraient ensemble une force effrénée,
S'imposant par le crime à la terre étonnée;
La cruauté, l'effroi, la rage et la fureur
Peuvent, elles aussi, atteindre à la grandeur;
On ne sait quoi de formidable et d'âpre éclate
Dans les destins de la science scélérate
Que l'Allemagne emploie à prodiguer la mort;
Nouveaux sont pour l'Europe et la vie et le sort.
Plus n'est besoin d'honneur, de vertu ni de gloire
Puisque le calcul dur et la trahison noire
Abattent mieux encor
Sur l'univers dompté, les poings de la victoire.

D'ailleurs n'est-il point, lui, l'Empereur et le Roi
Qui serre entre ses mains et modèle le droit
Qu'accepteront, demain, vingt peuples militaires
N'a-t-il point ses canons, dont les feux solitaires
Brisent un fort et ses coupoles d'un seul coup?
Commençant par Paris, finissant par Moscou,
Avec sa garde blanche il fera ses entrées
Sous les portes aux cent fleurons
Des capitales atterrées.
Et ses fifres et ses tambours et ses clairons
Annonceront

BELGIUM'S AGONY

Que monte et que s'épand sous le ciel d'Allemagne,
Pour la terreur du monde, un plus grand Charlemagne.

Hélas! depuis le temps que ce rêve s'en vint
Battre son front sonore et vain,
A-t-il senti avec quel rire
L'accueillirent
Ceux qui vraiment créaient et fondaient les empires?

o

CHAPTER VIII

GERMANY UNCIVILIZABLE

LIFE is not a means, but an end. Without this conviction a man can have no real existence in this world, for from it springs his chief duty, to make life a perfect thing, a masterpiece; to despise and hate those seek to soil it by their acts or by their thoughts.

In this ideal Germany has no part. She has her culture, but she has no civilization. The pride and freedom of the true social spirit is founded on intelligence but not on knowledge. The German professor is a walking library, an accumulation of facts, catalogued and annotated. Order and discipline are for him the sum of virtue. Under their pressure he becomes slowly servile and dependent. The habit of classifying knowledge tends to make him ready to submit himself to social classification. The world to him is a ladder; one either climbs a rung

higher or descends a rung lower. Thoughts fall into sealed compartments. His German mind becomes gradually materialized, congealed, and he remains a single rigid square in an unchanging social draught-board.

It is no new saying that the German never invents, but merely works upon the discoveries of others. And the reason for this is that in order to originate a man must have the capacity for rebellion. This the German cannot have, because he is the type that submits.

No sooner has a new discovery been made than he seizes upon it, examines it, tests it from every side, and succeeds usually in increasing its power and its importance. Finally, he finds for it a practical application and labels it accordingly, even as he himself is classified and labelled for his task in life.

In science the Germans have never faced a great new opening. Their paths are always lateral. From the highway of Descartes spring the side-roads of Leibnitz and Kant; there could hardly have been a Haeckel without a Darwin; Koch and Béring found their labours upon the work of Pasteur.

To the development of this second-hand

scientific research flock crowds of second-rate scholars. Each one, working in his little corner on his particular little subject, feels himself someone and swells with pompous vanity. Every little provincial university becomes a nest of learning, happy in the sunshine of the German conception of scholarship and seriousness. But it is really barrack life in a laboratory, and lacks utterly initiative, spontaneity, and above all, revolt.

If the German people had any real civilization they could not have kept silence in the face of Belgium's martyrdom. But even among those whose expressed ideas were hostile to every existing form of government, not a single one protested against this deed, admitted by the German Chancellor in full Reichstag to be a crime. The world has not yet recovered from its amazement at this silence. Liebknecht alone excepted, the German Social Democrats are dishonoured men. There was a cry to expel them from the "International." They made excuses, deepening their shame:

"Our members would have been imprisoned."

And the answer was:

"Were they then afraid to suffer for their faith?"

The Social Democratic party in Germany was organized and brigaded like the universities and the army. Its voting power was enormous. It seemed invincible, triumphant. In other countries men said:

"That is the real Germany."

May it serve as a bitter warning to all democracies! Its admirers declared that at the moment of need, this Socialist party would swallow the Imperialists at a gulp. In August last year, in one hour in the Reichstag, it was itself swallowed.

Quite recently some German socialists visited the Maison du Peuple at Brussels. They expressed astonishment that the Belgian democrats set such store by the invasion of their country.

"What is it binds you so closely to your native land?"

"Honour," replied the Belgians.

"Honour!" scoffed the Germans. "How absurdly middle-class!"

But honour is, all the same, the essence of

civilization. As an ideal it is aristocratic, having come down to us from the great men of past ages. With a more perfected training, force comes to oppose itself. It becomes controlled, intelligent, tempered with reserve and tact. Brute force becomes moral force; power becomes justice.

The further a nation is advanced in this development, the further she is from the material, the nearer to the spiritual, the greater the respect she shows in her institutions to the mass of humanity as a whole, the more she is civilized and the more she is noble.

Such a nation keeps her word. Interest, even necessity cannot force her to betrayal. She seeks to protect and not to crush those weaker than herself. She strives to spread through the world social ideals of a certain kind, which, however they may be Utopian, are good to cherish in the heart, so that life may be not merely for the present but also for the future.

These social ideals are the expression of fundamental human generosity. They will never be put wholly in practice, but towards

their achievement efforts will always be made. They are the negation of brute force; they guide the world towards a common peace; they have faith in the infinite perfectibility of human conscience. But only a nation whose civilization is noble can conceive such visions, can realize such harmony as possible among men. Germany has never attained to this conception, because her people are unadaptable and impossible to educate.

During my life I have been present at numerous gatherings in many European capitals, where Englishmen, Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, and Germans, jostled and argued in varied languages. Often the assembled company had great reputations, one and all. But I never saw, at any one of them, a German really appear to advantage. They are always half awkward, half aggressive, with a politeness little more than skin-deep. They seem afraid of appearing old-fashioned in idea. They applaud the most eccentric taste; they interpret "modernity" to mean the extreme of up-to-dateness; it would positively pain them if anyone in their presence praised anything the least bit bygone. As soon as a

German can get a hearing and begin to talk, he holds forth. But his harangue makes a point neither of clearness of phrase nor subtlety of meaning.

And it is the same in public as in private affairs. How cumbrous is the movement of the German diplomat about the foreign office tables of Europe. With what clumsy violence does the German conqueror impose himself on the lands he wins.

France, in fifty years, has made herself beloved in Savoy; in two centuries she assimilated Lille, Dunkirk, Strasburg, and Alsace. England in a few decades has attached to herself Egypt and South Africa. But Germany is still a hated name alike in Poland, Schleswig and Alsace-Lorraine. Wherever she goes, she is unwanted. She knows only the way to tear apart; not the way to unite and heal. Her proclamations shrivel the human mind as frost shrivels plants. She can neither attract, nor tempt, nor civilize, because she has herself no deep spiritual force. Europe, under the successive hegemony of Athens, Rome, and Paris, has been the noblest home of human progress

and development. Under German domination she will drift dismally into a gloomy officialdom, organized and drilled by a tyrannous ruling caste.

Nowadays we are forced to believe, however sadly, that the true Germany is, only by accident, that of Goethe, Beethoven, and Heine. Generally, almost always, she is a country of cruel barons and brutal soldiery. Thousands of years ago she let loose her hordes upon Europe, and she is doing the same to-day; it is her awful and sinister function. Let us make no mistake for the future. She is dangerous because she cannot be civilized, and in her castles, her valleys, and her barracks is a store, unexhausted and perhaps inexhaustible, of human savagery.

CHAPTER IX

GERMANY AND ART

NATIONS cannot live if one among them sees existence as a stage on which she can act with arrogance and violence for herself alone. Germany seeks to absorb the lives of all peoples in her own. She claims to be the sovereign nation responsible only to herself for her excesses. It is for her to think, feel, and will in the name of all the world. It is for her to lay down what is permissible and what is not. She assumes the rôle on earth, not of destiny, but of God.

It is easy for her to persuade herself that a moral conquest comes with a material one, that to dominate is also to charm. Her discipline—that is to say her tyranny—she considers indispensable to future progress. She does not pause to ask whether the graduated and wide-spread vassaldom which her discipline and her tyranny implies, is not the

greatest obstacle to the acceptance of her rule. Nevertheless, her methods, which she believes essential, are doomed to become merely futile, her strength, which she believes infallible, to become as infallible a weakness.

To impose her supremacy, therefore, Germany must control, so far as she may, the individual life of other nations. She must check the development of their differences and their contrasts, she must wage war on the originality of each group of human beings, on their various ideas of progress, order, and happiness. She must consequently, whether she wishes it or no, combat their special conceptions of beauty. Art, in its turn, must become booty and prey to her. She must crush and destroy all art that is not her own. Her mad conceit will convince her of the justice and necessity of the deed. She must go further and attack the past. No witness, whether of stone or bronze, will be heard that denies her aesthetic supremacy. Already Reims and her cathedral, things lovely as the day and night themselves, are razed to the ground. Already Ypres and her Market Hall, which sprang like a wonderful arch from the earth, are a

heap of cinders. Already the church of St. Pierre and the Library of Louvain, the almshouses of Termonde, are dead. To reproaches Germany replies: "I will replace these ancient monuments with finer modern substitutes. My taste shall provide them."

Always the pedagogue, she is infallible in all things, and beauty also is to be shaped by her hands alone. All the nobility of the genius of a race or of an individual, shall only survive with the modifications and at the command of the Teutonic despot. Irony and wit shall be curbed; originality and spontaneity abolished. The rhythm of the goose-step shall dominate all other rhythms; it shall be heard even in poetry. Free and personal art has had its day; the art of the future shall be hard, sharp, and glittering as a sword.

Of such an art the world has a horror; it can barely conceive so monstrous a thing. Till to-day, beauty, evolving from century to century, has found unity in diversity; it has blossomed, successively or simultaneously, in the countries of its choice. Italy, Flanders, and France have been specially favoured; but no one of them has ever sought, by brutality,

to impose her temporary superiority on the others. The very opposite was the case. Influence was reciprocal and always peaceful and advantageous. At certain times, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Italy claimed the admiration of the world for Fra Angelico, Verrochio, Botticelli, Masaccio, while Flanders replied by flashing abroad the brilliance of Van Eyck, Van der Goes, Memling, Juste de Gand, Gérard David, Van der Weyden.

Later, to Carracci, Reni, Domenichino, Albani, the Barrocci, Caravaggio, Bernini, made answer Rubens, Van Dyck, Seghers, Cornelius de Vos, Crayer, Jordaens, Teniers. Spain, with Velasquez, Herrera, Ribera, Zurbaran, and Murillo; Holland, with Rembrandt, Vermeer, Ruysdael, Hobbema, Fabritius, Steen, Hals, and Pieter de Hooch; and France, with Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Dughet, Lesueur, and Callot, spread over the whole of Europe the light of noble art.

Art was, at the same time and according to the country in which it developed, idealist or realist, ascetic or sensual. And along the walls of the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, it hung a splendid garland, to which each flower

contributed its particular and harmonious beauty.

Never in modern times have nations striven with such ardour after beauty; even the ancient world was rivalled, if not surpassed.

If Germany were Europe's conqueror, such a golden age of art, even were geniuses alive as great as these, would be impossible. Germany would break, systematically and scientifically, every one of those subtle ties between the artist and his proud and noble race, which spring from the heart of his mysterious power. The creator of masterpieces would shrink under the German determination to regulate, to brigade, to organize; he would be compelled to work after the ideals of Munich and Berlin; apt and mechanical rules, with axioms and arguments as commentary, would tell him that he can only avoid the production of ugliness, by yielding to the orders of tyranny and working as he is told to work.

Slowly, year by year, decade by decade, a European art has come into being. Those who toiled for it had little consciousness of it. They were instinctive in their efforts to pluck out from their own natures whatever was

narrow and exclusive. They humanized their feelings and their thoughts, but without losing their originality of mind. Everyone of them was faithful to his race, although he rose above and beyond it; he knew no constraint. Germany is attacking this European art at its vital point. It was rising in freedom; she seeks to hold it down and curb it to her will. In the effort she is really killing it at one blow.

After the war it will be necessary for national art, even nationalist art, to be again stressed and developed. Germany conquered, every man will be more passionately attached than before to the corner of ground he came so near to losing altogether. Europe will return to the old conception of territorial literature and painting. The different schools will appear again, each in its respective country.

Germany will turn into herself again, as she did after Jéna. She will collect all the strength that remains to her to work, and her silence will be blent of disillusion and bitterness. Art, which has not been lavish to her during her time of madness and bombast, will perhaps be more generous in her misfortune.

The resources of a nation may be likened to geological strata. One stratum lies deep; another less so; a third, a surface stratum, lies exposed. Perhaps that stratum of Germany which yielded Goethe and Schiller, will once more be worked, while those which produced Bismarck and von Moltke lie neglected.

Let us, indeed, pray for a German artistic renaissance. First, for the common good and beauty of the world; second, so that the flowers of this new blossoming may cloak the dung-hill of to-day's crimes.

Those who talk of exterminating the Germans do not realize that a young people cannot be exterminated. Only old and decaying nations can perish altogether. But the world has to defend itself against Germany with courage and tenacity. France and England must prepare to abandon confidence and live in mistrust. They must accept a future, in which life will be harsh and at extreme tension, like a drawn bow. Germany must be countered as soon as she goes too far. We must not seek to kill her, as I have already said. She must be crippled, like her Emperor.

CHAPTER X

GERMANY THE INQUISITOR

NOTHING in the world is more cynical or shameless than the habit of dogmatic assertion, which modern Germany has acquired. Her people have little aptitude for suppleness of speech; their minds are little suited to lucid or ingenious reasoning. They are compelled, therefore, to resort to brutality in their words as in their deeds. Now brutality of the mind is naked and shameless dogmatism.

The Kaiser says: "God is with us. I am His spirit and His sword. When we vanquish our foes, the honour and glory are His."

On what authority? The man merely voices his dreams and his visions. Lunatics do the same. In truth, God's honour would have a strange bed-fellow in that of William II.

German geographers proclaim: "From the Baltic to the North Sea, from Riga to Boulogne, Germany, Champagne, Belgium, and part of

France," all these lands are peopled by the Germanic race; Northern Europe, therefore, should be, and shall be, ours."

The assertion is simply untrue. These peoples are of varied origin. Some are Gauls, others, like the Walloons, Latin through and through.

The German sage, in the person of Herr Ostwald, professor of chemistry, writes: "German civilization is the foremost in the world, because it has abandoned the epoch of individualism and entered upon that of organization. Among our enemies the Russians are still in the tribal epoch, while the French and the English have arrived at a stage of cultural development which we left behind us 50 years ago."

But the organized civilization thus vaunted is really retrogressive. In the Middle Ages the Catholic Church imposed it far and wide over Europe. In economics the guilds established it, with its resulting tyranny and stagnation. Everything was done by special groups for the benefit of special groups. The individual ceased to count. Initiative and invention became impossible. The machine stifled intel-

lect; 1789 was needed to revive in Europe the spirit of independent thought and discovery, to start industrial and scientific progress on a new career of speed and lasting brilliance. Civilization is a mixture of freedom and control. But excess of freedom is anarchy, and excess of control tyranny. German organization is a vast machine which has cowed the German people into servitude. Everyone is the flunkey of the man above him. No pride, no self-respect can survive. The Press is held on the leash. Literary and scientific thought are drilled and brigaded. The man who resists the Emperor is broken. Liebknecht alone excepted, the German Socialist Party—itself, like the German State, a model of organization and discipline—has put the whole of European democracy to shame.

If the organization, lauded by Herr Ostwald, is to spread over the world, German dogma will scourge and terrorize humanity as did formerly the dogma of the Catholic Church. There is at bottom only this difference between the two doctrines—one is religious and the other civil. Both demand absolute submission and passive obedience. Both believe themselves

unique and destined for supremacy. The Roman Church proclaims itself the best of all the Churches, as the German State proclaims itself the best of all the States. Both have a blind belief in their power, and shrink from no sacrifice in support of it. Both have their apostles and their martyrs. Human life and death are for them merely stepping stones to world-power. The Roman Church has been organized for tyranny throughout history: Germany only for fifty years. But she intends to make up for lost time. Already, like the Church in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, she is plunged in mad and savage cruelties. She kills, loots, and burns. She stands for the terrorism of man as the Church stood for the terrorism of God. And as the irony of fate decrees that similar forces always struggle against one another, German savagery has assaulted Louvain, Malines, Reims, and other manifestations of Catholic power. Numbers of priests have been killed, and numbers of Churches have been razed to the ground without hesitation and without pity.

More than that, William II, at the very time he was paying assiduous court to the

Pope, told his sister-in-law, who, despite his wishes, had become a Catholic, that Catholicism it was which must be regarded as the enemy. So hateful is it to him that its destruction is the aim of his life; but he does not hesitate, before he joins battle, to adopt its formidable discipline and its headlong folly, its evil and unshrinking dogmatism.

All creeds assert their belief, and do not trouble to prove them. Founded on faith, they do not go beyond their proper rôle to appeal to reason. But States are a different matter. This, however, does not prevent Germany's determination to be regarded as a sort of earthly paradise. She permits no denial either of the infallibility of her culture or the perfection of her power. That is to say she transports, from the realm of the spiritual into that of the temporal, a whole system of persuasion and trust. She distorts the conception of natural objects; she deceives, or seeks to deceive, the whole world.

A process somewhat similar may succeed sometimes among simple and ignorant people. The constant asseveration of the same so-called truths results in their being accepted. The

German nation has been duped by their Prussian teachers, whose very words are law, who have blunted and atrophied their victims' powers of discernment and discrimination. These teachers have directed the eyes of their pupils towards a past of military and feudal despotism; they have forced on them the ideal, not of Heine and Schiller, but of Herr Ostwald, professor of chemistry, who thinks no doubt that a nation should form an organization by a series of actions and reactions, as a deposit forms at the bottom of a crucible. Spontaneity and deathless progress being thus subjected, Germany will reign triumphant over a stunned and fettered world of thought.

If the world permits such a murder of liberty, it will be the greatest crime of our age. Modern Europe must be able to show to history a garland of diverse civilizations to which each nation has contributed a flower of her genius. The power of Germany, in lessening, weakening, or crushing the power of France, England, Italy, Russia, Belgium, or Spain, is destroying a treasure of ideas, feelings, and impulses, which by itself it can never replace. These ideas, feelings, and impulses

are blossoming every day into noble deeds and beautiful creation. They are the honour and glory of the Western world. In fifty years the genius of Germany has been perverted into something aggressive and destructive, and this something it is which to-day has become a menace and a pestilence.

CHAPTER XI

GERMANY THE ASIATIC

IN the sixteenth century Spain, with her savagery and her fanaticism, seemed like a fragment of Africa soldered on to Western Europe. The Moors had conquered her. They had forced her to accept their brutal idea of violent authority. The Moors invaded France, but they were driven out again. They rooted themselves on the other side of the Pyrenees, among the mountain ranges of Castile. Cordova and Granada became their fortresses and their dominion.

Under the rule of Isabella the Catholic Spain was freed, but her tyrants had left their mark, so that her Christianity had the quality of her Islamism. She imposed her faith by blood and iron, thus following in the footsteps of Mahomet. She had her warrior-apostles; Alva. She had her dreaded hosts; Antwerp and the Flanders knew them well. She organized

terror with wholesale murder, with espionage, with denunciation, with torture. In the soul of each one of her soldiers she sowed the lessons of cruelty.

As Spain in the sixteenth century was imbued with the spirit of Africa, so Germany in the twentieth century is imbued with the spirit of Asia.

It is true that, as has been said above, her organization, with its myriad and rigid detail, is copied from that of mediaeval Catholicism. But the spirit which animates this vast machine is utterly opposed to Christianity; it is Semitic.

Let the facts speak. The Jews have thrust themselves, more numerously than anywhere else, into German lands. Nearly all the names they have adopted are German names. They flaunt them about the world. When their ghettos were suppressed, they toiled for the prosperity of the free cities—Lübeck, Hamburg, Bremen, Frankfort. Everywhere they amassed wealth. Their power became so great that it could dispense with proud display. It was active and strong, but secret.

When, after 1870, Germany turned to the development of her trade and industry, it was

the Jews that taught her to organize her efforts and to be skilful at business. They were wonderful teachers, probably the finest in the world. The great German shops, the steamship companies, the electrical firms are still ruled by powerful Jews. In other activities, they are less prominent. They prefer to leave ostensible direction to native Germans, while, from behind the scenes, they exercise the true control. And more than that. They surround the Emperor, and he chooses from among them his intimate advisers. Junkers and nobles, tempted by the desire for wealth, entrust them with their fortunes, confide to them their hopes. In every undertaking of German finance, we meet either them, or their equally Semitic cousins, the German-Americans.

The Jewish spirit—and this is not said as an attack upon it, but rather to show its victorious influence—has penetrated every department of German life, both bourgeois and aristocratic. It has blended most completely of all in Prussia, for it is in itself an exaggeration of the Prussian spirit.

With the exception of the newspapers of

the Catholic Centre, every great daily of Vienna, Frankfort and Berlin is controlled by Jews. Jewish ingenuity, intelligence, industry, and wealth have made these papers prosper. They are up-to-date, well-informed, keen-minded and all-embracing. Matters artistic are treated as vital and important. Art is honoured, perhaps it is genuinely loved.

To-day the German press is peevish, prejudiced, hypocritical, foolishly boastful. For the moment it is subject to its hour and its surroundings. Before the war the opinions of the day were dominated by it.

It worked tirelessly, day after day, to transform the old Germany. It propagated the idea of unity, it won over Bavaria, Saxony, Wurtemberg. To a people formerly idealist it taught efficiency and realism. It turned the eyes of the race towards conquest and booty, it urged ceaseless vigilance, boundless love of gain, skilful daring, endless patience, untiring perseverance. Finally, the idea that everything has its price, that business dominates the world, that all of life is self-interest and none of it sentiment, became gradually, not only a Jewish but also a German conviction, and so

far altered the life and character of the new German Empire that Karl August would no longer have recognized his people. Germany became a great industrial and commercial power. England and France were out-distanced. The supremacy of America was threatened.

This spirit of successful daring that another race had taught to German commerce, became, in the eyes of German diplomacy and statecraft, a desirable possession. They began to regard international relations as matters for bargaining. A just cause, a nation's pride or conscience, seemed mere phrases, ridiculous and obsolete. Governments reasoned in one way, ordinary people in another.

And so, in high politics, one either advanced or retreated according as one's diplomatic moves were skilful or clumsy. A demand followed a concession; an attack, a retreat. Even when Germany presented her ultimatum to Belgium, she came prepared for huckstering. Never for an instant did she consider that the Belgians had spiritual fervour in their souls. She talked of profit and loss as on the Stock Exchange. When her offers were rejected she

was amazed. Her surprise turned to anger, and her anger has not yet cooled.

But it is above all in the conduct of war that Germany has revealed the spirit of Asia that dominates her. Aryan Europe has, since the middle ages, gradually christianized her barbarous instincts. She has fought her battles with honour. She has created the most perfect type of soldier—the knight. She introduced the Truce of God. She condemned deceit and treachery. During the Renaissance Francis I and Bayard were the models of honour and nobility. In the eighteenth century, at Fontenoy, war was courteous and gallant. During the French Revolution and the First Empire it was sublime.

To-day, thanks to Germany, war is branded and dishonoured by treachery and lies. No longer can one rely on the word of the enemy; no longer can one trust his promises; his every action is known to cloak a crime. Candour and honour have disappeared; they are mocked and scorned. Cruelty and barbarism have become a system. Pity has vanished. The wounded are butchered, the dead thrown into a river. Dying men are burned alive,

prisoners are slain. Prussian methods recall those bas-reliefs of the relentless Assurbanipal, commanding the torture of his conquered foes, their total extermination. Pillage, arson, wholesale destruction were the orders given in war by the Babylonians of Asia centuries ago. They are the orders given in war by the Germans of Europe to-day. The two empires are actuated by the same insane pride. It is reflected in those ancient documents preserved by the Louvre and the British Museum. It finds expression in this document of yesterday, published in *Grossdeutchland und Mitteleuropa um das Jahr* 1950:

> "After a short term of years, we shall see some such sight as this. The German flag will wave over 86 millions of Germans, and they will govern a dominion peopled by 130 millions of Europeans. In this great empire, only the Germans will have political rights, only the Germans will be owners of property. They will be a nation of masters, permitting, by condescension, that the peoples under their rule should perform menial labour."

It matters little which tyrant of the ancient

East puts his signature to this pronouncement —Cambyses, Artaxerxes, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar. Through it breathes the most savage spirit of inhumanity that has existed upon earth. It seeks to plunge the world once more into tyranny, to revive slavery, to set back history three thousand years. Since the Christians of Rome transformed the universe, no such mad perversion of power has swayed the mind of a conqueror. A nation which cherishes such an ideal, arouses once again all the savage instincts that were regarded as for ever crushed. Such a nation must be battled with as one battles with death itself. Europe must, as one man, flee from it and avoid it. The Turks alone can be its allies; they are predestined so to be, seeing that they also have inherited the barbarism of Asia. May they fight and fall together, and together be hurled beyond the pale of civilization.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

GERMANY, as has been said, has succeeded in breathing into the rigid organization, which she has modelled on that of the Catholic Church, the keen and material spirit of the Jews. To unite two powers, each one victoriously emerged from the test of centuries, was a fine idea but not an easy one to carry out. Prussia first undertook the task of animating with a Jewish soul the Roman body. She had no hesitations; her military tradition, at once relentless and corrupt, came to her aid. She succeeded.

This achieved, the work went quickly and skilfully forward, from land to land across the Germanies. Bavaria and Austria submitted with a bad grace. They suffered at having to abandon their ancient religious traditions of goodness and pity, to crush their human kindness, to become states with-

out generosity and without faith. Austria, especially, could not cut adrift her past nor forget that it was against her that the new German spirit had won its spurs. Sadowa came bitterly to mind. She yielded, however, because at the bottom of her heart she knew that she also was a bird of prey among nations.

As for Germany herself, when her victory over France had given her the preponderance of power in Europe, she became the wonder of the West. She blustered and bullied and none knew better than she, how to win obedience. Bismarck was of all men the most adept at trampling under his great boots rights and protestations. His word was hung upon in fear and silence. So far from being overshadowed by the German eagle, he lent to it the brilliance of his genius.

He remade a nation, arming it with vigour and courage, imbueing it with his own abruptness and terse violence. He turned its mind from the ideal to the profitable and the modern. He was a great and terrible teacher, and, according to his own words: "A German fears nothing under the sun, only God."

CONCLUSION

After the fall from power and then the death of her pilot and saviour, Germany felt herself strong enough to control her own destiny. She had schools and barracks. She set about acquiring factories and dockyards. She had a slight, but respectful, distrust of her young Emperor.

From end to end her territory became a hive of industry. The Main, the Oder, the Rhine, the Elbe were hedged with factory chimneys. Railways and waterways ran side by side or crossed each other in every direction. Great railway stations were built, their huge glass roofs gleaming at night like stars. Each ancient city had its new quarter; vast shops sprang into being, temples of the new German fever; suburbs writhed into the country like clutching tentacles; the old sun gloomed behind dense clouds of smoke. Trashy goods, fatal but beloved of the crowd, began to litter the high roads of the new German commerce. They were spread the world over, catering to the endless different desires and tastes of every nation. Orders were taken and executed from every corner of the earth. Formerly European industry

had dominated its clients; distant lands must needs use commodities manufactured for western tastes. Germany changed all this. Her trade was the servant of every public and prospered beyond her wildest dreams. Soon she was the nation to which the markets of Asia, Africa, America, and the islands of the seas looked before any other. The Stock Exchanges of Sydney, of New York, of Singapore, of Bombay rang with the clatter of German gold. The Frankfort broker became the agent of national ambition; the commercial traveller from Berlin was the spy or the emissary of German world-policy. While she was in this way becoming ever stronger and greater in every land, Germany began, with tireless patience, to win herself a place on the high seas.

In Bismarck's time there was practically no imperial fleet. Over-sea colonization seemed to the great statesman mere chimerical rashness. His policy was European. He worked for a union of the three Empires—German, Russian, and Austrian—which should dominate the Latin races.

Nevertheless, even during his time, Hamburg was becoming of first importance. Bismarck did all in his power to help the city. In his retirement he lived not far away. He owned a newspaper of the town. From this Patmos by the sea, he spoke to the world and to the Emperor, never as a rebel, but as an opponent whose words had sometime won attention. But when, one day, a voice said: "Our future lies upon the water," it was not Bismarck's voice but that of William II.

And all the time the destiny of Germany was growing. The greatest shipping-combine in the world, led by Ballin, a Jew, covered the seas with its ships. Bremen and Lübeck joined Hamburg. The *Nord-Deutscher Lloyd*, in rivalry, coalesced with the *Hamburg-Amerika*. England felt herself touched in a tender spot. She could not realize all the naked truth behind these wonderful German liners that passed to and fro over the ocean more swiftly and more surely than her own. The will to conquer seized the minds of both countries. England in this struggle showed the first signs of fear. Germany began to increase, with

sudden bounds, her fleets of war. The wealth of the Empire was poured out to build ships and ever more ships. Germany seemed in the grip of a disciplined fury that could not stop or even set a limit to the violence of its fever.

In the meantime, in the universities and in the army, theorists of a new and dangerous type began to appear. They laid down, in a kind of revised edition of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the spirit in which this vast new acquisition of power and pride should be administered. And so, from boyhood onward, the young German was trained to a code of master-morals. The text-books are well-known. They have been edited by Gobineau, Ostwald, Treitschke, Bernhardi, Lasson. In them might dominates right. Rigid and relentless organization is upheld as the new and unfailing path to perfection. Germany makes herself out as discoverer of this path, as the guide who thereby will lead the world to a higher level of civilization. She alone has the secret of the way. She creates new meanings and values for good and evil. Necessity is her only law. To necessity

must bow treaties, promises, oaths, pride, honour, generosity, pity, liberty, progress—all the obsolete trash of a vanished era. Germany alone has the key to the new morality, because she alone has the force necessary to maintain it. It is consequently her duty to impose her ideas on the world, and all that she does in their name is right. In her relations with other peoples she need consider only herself.

During the twenty years spent in building this new morality on the foundations of German power and industry, the German soul has correspondingly changed. Its egotism is now a vast deformity. There is, henceforth, in the world nothing but the German. He is incapable of seeing outside himself, of understanding anything that is not his already. The German diplomat is stupid and clumsy, the German soldier is automatic and unreflecting, the German people is blind and obstinate, because they cannot, in the least degree, understand their enemies. They can never put themselves in another's shoes. They weep or rejoice, suffer or triumph, for this reason or for that, and cannot realize that their neigh-

bours and their enemies may, for the same cause, laugh when they weep, suffer when they rejoice. Their psychology is that of the child.

This blind egotism leads only to a general weakness and collective folly, of which a representative, or rather a symbol, is found in William II. The Emperor is clothed with brilliance, but beneath the splendour he is wasted and feeble. He has to the full the specious talent required for the work he has to do.

Bismarck held the present, refractory and living, in his hands, and curbed it to his will. William II contents himself with words. He juggles with phrases, gilded like his uniforms, and thinks that to prophecy victory in his harangues is enough to put it within his grasp. His impatience is a danger to his country.

As though to push to its furthest limits his own folly and the egotism of his people, he has gathered in the deep folds of his own vague mysticism all the selfishness, all the hate, and all the savagery of those around him. Even though his doctors and

his professors of philosophy still spoke in terms of a vague humanity, he himself held forth in the name of his own uncontrolled sagacity. The God whom Bismarck venerated he has given a place at his side. The Deity is now his intimate and his colleague. He is enjoined to devote Himself to the cause of Germany, the chosen land, the genius of the world, the sword of destiny. The kings of Israel and their prophets talked six thousand years ago at Jerusalem as he talks to-day at Potsdam and Berlin. And his madness even achieves a sort of magnificence.

The economic enterprise, the science, the discipline, the strength of Germany, the arrogance of the German Emperor, have now become a national myth, in which the world must be taught to believe and whose value it must learn to cherish.

German civilization is a blend of all these elements. It has become an instrument of despotism. It reaches, like a ladder, from material prosperity to transcendent mysticism, and among its rungs are commercial, scientific, and military organization. But is this civilization the new discovery it boasts itself to

be? Are we non-Germans to regard it as a second revelation?

To begin with, nothing is older than to base a scheme of social perfection on a claim to Divine Right. William II is a scrupulous imitator. He has revived the most ancient traditions of Europe. He is emperor and king by the Grace of God. When he goes out to war, he reminds us either of Mahomet or of St. Louis. He talks to his troops as these two visionaries must have talked to theirs. His lofty mysticism cankers even the principles of German domination in Europe and the world. The history of mediaeval kings, and of the tyrants of the Renaissance, shows us what we shall undergo if he succeeds in planting himself in France, England, or Belgium. The organization which this mystic tyranny demands is the oldest organization in the world, because it is slavery. Professor Ostwald and all the pan-Germanists are agreed upon that. The old conception of a master-people and subject peoples must be restored.

Further, liberty must be diminished and most carefully controlled. Submission is in-

finitely more important than thought. The university models itself on the barracks. Work in the factories is skilfully graded and divided, but at the same time it is brigaded to an absurd degree. It suggests the gilds and corporations of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Everything is foreseen, regulated, congealed, stereotyped; everything is ordered to perfection. But what is all that but rusty fetters and discredited formulae that the world has long ago rejected?

The methods of organization, whether governmental, economic, or social, which Germany has to show us, have been used for centuries and are now worn out. All the good that the toil and experience of a hundred nations has been able to get from them, is enshrined in history. We know what has produced on earth terror, cruelty, the inquisition, savage organization, passive obedience, religious or scientific dogmatism, submission of thought and longing to the service of some one aim that has declared itself sacred, the will for power made one with arbitrary tyranny. It is the ancient spirit of the feudal world that Germany has revived, the same spirit with

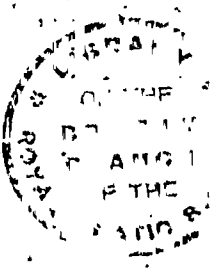
hardly a difference. And just as, for thousands of years, humanity has striven to crush it, so it must now once and for all be crushed at this hour of supreme destiny.

The spirit of to-day, wrought of pride and liberty, wrought of human reason and human idealism, wrought of an emotion infectious and splendidly dangerous, the spirit of to-day which is little more than a hundred years old, and the strength and brilliance of which time has not yet brought fully to light, is most utterly opposed to the spirit of Germany. It is the former and not the latter which is young, and which turns its face forward to the future. It is the former spirit alone that contains the seed of the future, and enables man to adapt himself to new conditions of life, that gives him strength to accomplish the inevitable evolution. It is the former spirit alone that enshrines the ever-growing strength and the ultimate salvation of the world.

And of this spirit, thou, Belgium, art the symbol! Thou, even before France and England, defiedst the cruel power of Germany. Never has greater honour been thine, honour

which thou hast won with a heroism, simple and magnificent. What matter that at this moment thou art bleeding and in agony! Never hast thou been more lovely, never more beloved.

FINIS.



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